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MEDITATIONS

FOR THE USE OF

THE SECULAR CLERGY

FROM THE FRENCH OF

FATHER CHAIGNON, S.J.

BY

RIGHT REV. L. DE GOESBRIAND, D.D.
Bishop of Burlington

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PREAMBLE.

So far we have in our meditations followed the plan traced by St. Ignatius, a plan admirable in itself, which leads man to sanctity, we may say, in a three-fold way: First, by cleansing him from his sins; secondly, by making him acquainted with and a sharer in the sublime virtues which have their origin in Our Lord Jesus Christ; thirdly, by turning his heart to the love of God. In following that plan, admirable and perfect though it is, we have not been able to dwell on subjects connected with the different seasons of the liturgical year, or with the solemnities and mysteries which are commemorated within the same period. We may have said a little here and there, but not enough to satisfy the cravings of pious souls.

And yet we should meditate on these festivals of the Christian year; we should comprehend their meaning, not only for the sake of our own sanctification, but also in order to bring about the sanctification of the many souls committed to our care. On the solemn festivals which occur during the year, and which come to us as so many favors from above, the subject naturally presents itself to our meditation. But how can one spend the solemnities of Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, or of the Sacred Heart, or, again, the festivals of our blessed Lady, and of the saints, with fervor and devotion, unless he direct his attention to the spirit of the Church by meditating as she herself meditates. Moreover, the subjects are so varied that, far from being a tedious occupation, it is one which brings with it a deep sense of increased strength and interior joy.

The liturgical year is divided into three parts: The first, which ends with the feast of the Purification, is called Advent; the second comprises Lent and the Paschal season; and the third embraces the remainder of the year, namely, from Pentecost to the first Sunday in Advent. These periods we will divide into three sections, and in each section we will consider the proper of the time and the proper of the saints.

SECTION FIRST.

Advent and Christmas.

PROPER OF THE TIME.

ADVENT is a time of prayer and penance, instituted by the Church to prepare her children to commemorate in a worthy manner the mystery of the nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Lent is a preparation for Easter; the four thousand years preceding the birth of Christ were a preparation for His coming into this world, and the four weeks of Advent are a preparation for the solemnity of Christmas.

The Church speaks to us of three advents of Our Lord, and she wishes us to make these three comings the subjects of our meditations during this holy season. "In the first coming," says St. Bernard, "Jesus came to us in the flesh like unto ours and clothed with our infirmities; in the second He comes in spirit and in grace; in the third He will come with power and majesty to judge the living and the dead."[1] Pierre de Blois tells us also: "The first coming of the Son of man was a very humble and obscure one, the second is a mystery of love, the third will be a manifestation of His power; He will come to terrify sinners and make known[2] the final triumph of the just."

[1] De Advent, Serm. v.

[2] Ibid., Serm. III.

First Sunday of Advent.

MEDITATION I.

DUTIES OF THE PRIEST IN CONNECTION WITH THE THREE-FOLD COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

1.—*Christ Comes into the World at His Birth to Renew the Face of the Earth.*

2.—*Christ Comes into our Souls by His Grace in Order to Sanctify Us and Live within Us.*

3.—*Christ will Come on the Last Day to Judge the World.*

First Point.—Christ comes into this world to renew the face thereof. This is the event which the Church will soon commemorate. What was the world before the coming of Christ, before that blessed day in which it was said: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us"? When He came, whom all the true children of Abraham had expected, did He benefit the world? Did He put an end to the misery that existed in the universe? Let us compare our condition—ours especially, the priests and friends of Jesus—with the condition of the most renowned and privileged ones of the Old Dispensation. The Messias after whom they sighed for the space of four thousand years, praying that the "heavens might rain down the just"—Him we possess; He is really our Emmanuel. Whom all the patriarchs and prophets awaited with much longing, we have in our possession. Have we returned thanks to divine Providence, to God who predestined us to live in days posterior to the coming of His Son? Do we ever stop to reflect on the immensity of such a blessing? Alas, if people in the world are too often unmindful of it, does not the reason of it lie with their pastors, who themselves give it but very little thought?

Ah, Priest of God, the solemnity of Christmas is more for you than a pious reminder of ages gone by. Every morning the mystery of Bethlehem is renewed on the altar of your ministration. As often as you offer up the holy sacrifice of the Mass, you give to the world the same God who was born of the purest of virgins.

Your lips, says Tertullian, bring Him forth, *parturiente lingua.* Your hands and your heart are the manger, and the sacramental species are the swaddling-clothes. Bow down in adoration of the loving God born in your hands. Welcome Him, and let your heart be filled with transports of joy and a firm hope. By holy communion He comes to work in your soul the same wonders which He wrought at His coming among men, namely, to drive away darkness, to curb evil inclinations, and to infuse into your soul holiness and joy. He comes to you with more favors than you could ever dream of.

Second Point.—Spiritual coming of Christ into souls in order to sanctify and save men. It would profit us very little to know that Christ came over nineteen hundred years ago to visit mankind, "through the bowels of His mercy," if we did not know that He has since that time been coming incessantly, that He might impart to each and every one that spiritual life which He alone can give with abundance. Behold the mystery which should move all hearts. The Redeemer, well aware that no man is accepted by the Father unless he be made conformable to the Son, "in whom He is well pleased," comes to us; He changes us into Himself so that we live no longer, but Christ lives in us, and the Father addresses us as His own Son: "This is My beloved Son." Where is fallen man? Since God became man, man is become, as it were, God. Yes, this is done in the Church; this is the noble task she pursues through the ministry of her priesthood; hence we may easily see that the priest is, by nature of his office, the greatest benefactor of his fellow men.

During the four weeks of Advent Jesus knocks at the door of the hearts of men in a more pressing manner; if only they consent He will deign to enter; He craves only for a place. By His spiritual birth in their souls He gives to the just a more abundant life, and snatches the sinner from the very jaws of death; for He wills not the death of the sinner, but rather "that he be converted and live." We are His appointed ministers; let us, by all means in our power, further the designs of His mercy. We can prepare the way and make it straight, level the mountains and hills of pride, fill the valleys of discouragement and weakness; all this in a spiritual sense we may have to do, and the task may be hard, but nothing is impossible with God, who will lend us the strength of His arm. But before preparing others let us prepare ourselves for that coming of the Son of God. That we may be truly zealous, let us fear and let us hope.

Third Point.—On the last day Christ will come to judge the world. As the solemnity of Christmas draws near, holy Church is

not without some anxiety. She foresees that many of her children, nay, many perhaps of her priests, will show themselves as indifferent as were the people of Bethlehem on the day of His first coming. It is written, "His own received Him not . . . there was no room for them." In order to avert such a calamity, she ceaselessly, in her prayers, calls on all to do penance. From the pulpit we hear the voice of the great Apostle, and of Isaias, and of John, and of Christ Himself. "Now is the time for us to rise from sleep." She asks us all to do penance, to bring forth fruits worthy of penance; she strikes terror into the hearts of all by reminding them of the Last Judgment. To every one she says, Make your choice now; either mercy to-day or judgment hereafter. Either the meek Lamb who taketh away the sins of the world, or the fierce Lion who will come later on with the severest vengeance. If you now welcome the Babe who is in the manger in all His loveliness, on the Last Day, on the Day of Judgment, there will be no terror in store for you. But woe to those who know not the time of His visitation! Because they now pass unnoticed the Babe that weeps for them, a day will come when they will say in despair: "Mountains, fall upon us, and ye hills, cover us under your ruins!"

But is it enough for you, Priests of God, to remind the people of these great truths? Have they no meaning for you as well as for others? The truth is that these sentences apply to none more than to priests. For on the Last Day the priests will, of necessity, have either the greater glory or the greater confusion. Make, therefore, in the beginning of Advent, the resolution to spend this season according to the spirit of holy Church—namely, in working out your own salvation as well as the salvation of those committed to your care. Let yours be lives of prayer and recollection; raise your eyes and your hearts to heaven. *Rorate, coeli, desuper.* "Let the heavens be opened." Come, Lord Jesus, come. In regard to your flock, instruct them, prepare them for the reception of the sacraments, show them a good example.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Coming of the Lord into the world to sanctify the world. Soon the Church will commemorate the anniversary of this event. What was the world before and what has it been since the coming of Our Lord? Let us compare our condition with that of the best friends of God under the Old Dispensation; all the blessings they longed for we now possess. Let us bow down in adoration of the infant God who transformed us by His grace as He changed the face of the universe.

Second Point.—Spiritual coming of Our Lord into the souls of men in order to sanctify and save them. Our Lord changes us into Himself, so that we no longer live for the world, but Christ liveth in us. During Advent Jesus asks admittance into the hearts of men with more earnestness. He wishes to come to the just to give them more abundantly of His own justice; to sinners, that they may repent of their evil ways, be converted, and live.

Third Point.—Last coming of the Lord to judge the world. During the four weeks of Advent the Church uses every argument in order to prepare her children for the coming of the Redeemer. She moves the sinner by the thought of the Last Judgment. She says: Make now your choice, either mercy or judgment; either the meek Lamb who taketh away the sins of the world, or the fierce Lion bearing with Him vengeance and death. Make up your mind to enter at once into the spirit of the Church, to devote your time to your own salvation, and to the salvation of the flock under your care.

Second Sunday of Advent.

MEDITATION II.

THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST. HOW HE PREPARED HIMSELF FOR HIS HIGH OFFICE.

Every good priest is a precursor of the Lord Jesus Christ. We may very appropriately say of him, "Thou shalt be called the prophet of the Most High, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways." (Luke, i. 76.) "Our Lord sent His apostles into every city and place where He was to come Himself."[1] For, says St. Gregory, *Praedicatores suos Dominus sequitur: quia praedicatio praevenit, et tunc ad mentis nostrae habitaculum Dominus venit, quando verba exhortationis praecurrunt.* (Hom. xvii. in Evang.) We see, therefore, that we go before Our Lord to prepare His way by preaching His word. By his example John the Baptist shows us how to fit ourselves for this important office, and points out the zeal which must accompany the discharge of our duty. Let us meditate to-day, then, on the qualities necessary to every preacher, and if we look at St. John, we will notice in that perfect model three principal features:

1.—*A Spirit of Recollection and Prayer.*
2.—*A Complete and Unreserved Dependence on God.*
3.—*A Life of Penance and Mortification.*

[1] In omnem civitatem et locum quo erat ipse venturus. (Luke, x. i.)

First Point.—John the Baptist fitted himself for the office of preacher by a spirit of recollection and prayer. He was very young when he went into the desert; there he dwelt for years, communing with none but God, with whom he held the closest intercourse. As he was in the desert, so he was later on, when he entered upon the duties of his ministry, a man of recollection and of prayer.

The moments spent by an apostolic man in recollection may appear to worldly minded people as time wasted, but they are the most precious in the sight of God. Here is a good priest in his room: for hours and hours he prays in silence; to look at him who would think that he has charge of a whole congregation, dependent on him for their salvation. What is he doing? Just what John was doing in the desert. He is communing with God, trying to discover God's will, and getting ready to obey when that will is made known to him. He prays for those virtues so necessary to a man of God, namely, faith, charity, patience, humility. In order words, he brings home to his own heart those virtues which he must soon strive to inculcate in others.

Sometimes people complain that there is more of the word of man in sermons given from the pulpit than there is of the word of God. Why is this a cause for wonder if our preachers do not commune with God in prayer and recollection? *Prius aurem cordis aperiat voci Creatoris, et postmodum os sui corporis aperiat auribus plebis.* (St. Greg. in Ezechiel, l. 1.)[1] Communion with God has always been the practice of those fishers of men who went out to catch, not fishes, but men, in their apostolic nets. Our Lord Himself said: *Quae audivi ab eo, haec loquor in mundo*: "What I speak to the world, that I have heard from the Father." (John, viii. 26.) And how cold must be that sermon in which there is nothing of the Spirit of God! Alas, O Lord, too often we forget that the work of sanctifying souls is more Thy work than ours! *Nos loquimur foris*, says St. Augustine, that is all a man can do. God alone can touch the heart and move it to repentance. *Ipse intellectum aperit, ipse terret, ipse movet, ipse aedificat.* So, before preaching, we must commune with God, that He may direct our words.

Second Point.—John was under the direction of the Spirit of God. For thirty years he denied himself the consolation of seeing Him who caused him to leap with joy in his mother's womb. Later on he lived apart from the apostles, the chosen friends of

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[1] The audience will profit a great deal, says Father Lallemant, if the orator be a man of prayer and recollection; for God, in fifteen minutes and less, will teach such a man far more than he could learn by very long and hard studies. (Sp. Doct.)

Him whose precursor he was. No doubt he would have experienced the greatest joy in the company of Our Lord and the chosen twelve, but a sacrifice was asked, and he made it willingly. In order to understand fully the sacrifice that John made of his own will, we must remember that even before he came to this world he was eager to announce the Redeemer, as St. John Chrysostom tells us.[1] If eager to do this even before he was born, how was his eagerness increased after he had spent so many years in the desert, in solitude and prayer? And yet he remained there till he was told that the time had come: *Erat in desertis usque in diem ostensionis suae ad Israel.* (Luke, i. 80.) He waited till the hour had come, but, as soon as it was made known to him, he made no delay. *Factum est verbum Domini super Joannem. . . . Et venit in omnem regionem Jordanis, praedicans baptismum poenitentiae.* (Luke, iii. 2, 3.) He went where the Spirit of God led him. He preached what the Spirit of God directed him to preach; the time, the place, the subject, the manner of his preaching were under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. John was truly the voice and the willing instrument of the Holy Spirit. *Ego vox clamantis in deserto.*

Where now are to be found preachers thus influenced by the Holy Ghost, who follow naught but His inspirations? How many there are who even ignore the inspiration of the Spirit of God because of human prospects and from worldly reasons.[2] How many even in so holy a duty follow the inclination of nature—and yet the object of this duty is to destroy the sway of nature, and make way for that of divine grace.

Third Point.—John's success was due to his mortified and holy life. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave testimony of him before the multitude who had heard his preaching and profited by it. "What did you go into the desert to see"—a man without brain or mind?—"a reed shaken by the wind"?—"a man clothed in soft garments," surrounded with all the comforts of life? You would not leave all to go to hear such a man. What good could such a preacher do? No, you have been attracted and then captivated by the eminent and visible holiness of the new prophet. We are not aware that John performed miracles—but he was full of contempt for the world, a man who crucified his flesh and was dead to self.

An austere and mortified preacher is always an eloquent preacher. His eloquence acts alike upon God and man, for, as

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[1] Less. of II. Noct. Feast of the Visitation.

[2] There is no doubt such conduct on the part of a priest is a hindrance to the establishment of the kingdom of God.

Bossuet says, one must commune with God if he wishes to persuade men, since it is from above that graces come, that is, those graces that move the heart and conquer rebellious wills. Besides, there is nothing that so moves God to mercy as the mortification practised by the preacher of His word, who takes upon himself, as it were, a part of the punishment due, on account of their sins, to those who listen to him.

It is easy to see, then, why some preachers succeed better than others, why some gather in a harvest with very little effort, why others are always sowing, without being able to reap. The seed is the word of God, "living and effectual."[1] Some priests, who lead a tepid, worldly, and sensual life, render their preaching fruitless. Others, entirely devoted to the glory of God and the sanctification of souls, succeed in gathering a most abundant harvest. Up to the present time, how have I prepared myself to announce to the people the word of God? Scripture says that the beauty of the daughter of Sion is from within. Have I been persuaded that the greater the union with God, the greater the success of the preacher? Have I always acted under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit! Have I mortified myself in order to stay the anger of God and draw blessings upon my listeners? O, my Lord Jesus, come to my assistance when I go to preach to my brethren. Be Thou in my heart and upon my lips, that I may, in a worthy manner, break the bread of life to the Christian people: *Dominus sit in corde meo et in labiis meis, ut digne et competenter annuntiem Evangelium. Amen.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—John prepared himself to preach the word of God by prayer and recollection. Early in life he retired into solitude. The moments spent in prayer and silence before preaching are the best guarantee of the success of one's sermon: *Nos loquimur foris;* but God does enlighten the intellect and move the hearts of the hearers. Let us commune with God, and allow ourselves to be guided by His Holy Spirit.

Second Point.—John was prompted by the Holy Ghost in all his actions during the whole course of his public ministry. He waited for the time appointed by Almighty God. When it came, he went at once whither the Spirit directed him. He preached according to the direction of the Spirit. How many preachers

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[1] (Heb. iv. 12.)

are actuated only by human considerations and worldly motives, and thereby frustrate the designs of God!

Third Point.—John's success was due to his mortified and saintly life. "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? A man clothed in soft garments?" The way to draw the people to us and to God is to lead a life of penance and mortification.

Third Sunday in Advent.

MEDITATION III.

THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST CONTINUED.

1.—*Subject Treated by Him.*
2.—*Zeal with which He Treated It.*

First Point.—Subject treated by St. John. It may be summed up in very few words: Do penance. . . . go to Jesus Christ.

I. Do penance. The holy precursor shows how necessary penance is. He speaks of the qualities of true penance, and tells plainly how dangerous it is to postpone it.

"Who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Luke, iii. 7.) How will the sinner escape the terrible judgment and the everlasting torment unless he abandon sin? For, not unlike the husbandman, Christ will one day make His appearance "with His fan in His hand, and He will purge His floor and He will gather the wheat into His barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."[1] Penance, therefore, is necessary, and that penance must prove itself by the effects which it produces. "Bring forth fruits worthy of penance"; that is to say, penance, as He preaches it, must do away not only with sin, but even with the causes of sin; it must repair the evil committed; it must, in fact, change the sinner into a new man.

And woe to him that postpones such penance: "*The axe is laid to the root of the trees.*" These trees are soon to be cut down, and what is to be their fate? Alas for the sinner! The tears of remorse and despair will not avail on that day, because they come too late. It is written: "Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire." Dost thou hear the

[1] Congregabit triticum in horreum suum, paleas autem comburet igne inextinguibili. (Luke, iii. 17.)

word, O my soul? "Every tree." There is no exception. That tree on which more care has been bestowed, if it remain barren, or if it bring forth bad fruit, will surely receive a still more rigorous chastisement.

II. In order to convert men, John brought them to Christ; at least he held Him up to them as the great physician who comes to heal all that are ailing, and conquer sin itself. "Behold," he says, "the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world." (John, i. 29.) He used all the power of his virtues and his character to lead the multitudes to Christ, at whose feet he left them. On every occasion he gave testimony to the divine mission of the Son of God made man. He sent to Him some of his disciples, saying: "I saw, and I gave testimony that this is the Son of God." (John, i. 34.) Though born among men, Christ is before all ages. My baptism is only a baptism of water, but the baptism of Jesus is one of fire. Water cleanses the body, but fire penetrates into the very souls of men.[1] How he suffers when the multitudes ignore Him who came to save them.[2] To make Jesus known, served, and loved—behold the mission, the noble ambition of all holy preachers! *Prædicamus Christum.* (1 Cor. i. 23.)

Second Point.—The zeal with which John preached. His zeal was ardent and fearless. In order to convert hardened sinners, he sent terror into their hearts. He tore the mask from the hypocrite. To put a stop to scandal, he raised his voice in a thunder of invective. He spared no one. The proud as well as the hypocritical he attacked with the courage of Christ Himself, whose precursor he was. When he saw the Pharisees and the Sadducees coming to him to be baptized, he exclaimed. "Brood of vipers"—that is to say, you who instil into the souls of men the poison of false doctrines and traditions—"who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come? Do ye penance." The true preachers of God's Gospel must show, at times, just such fiery zeal for the glory of the Master: *Ignitum eloquium tuum vehementer.* (Ps. cxviii. 140.) "And Elias the prophet stood up as a fire, and his words burnt like a torch." (Eccl. xlviii. 1.)

O Priest of God, is your eloquence as penetrating, is it as full of burning fire as was that of St. John? Does it go deep into the soul? Does it wound the soul unto conversion? Is it a burning

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[1] "And I saw, and I gave testimony that this is the Son of God." (John, i. 34.) "I indeed baptize with water; but there shall come one mightier than I. . . He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (Luke, iii. 16.)

[2] "There has stood One in the midst of you whom you know not." (John, i. 26.)

torch, is it a cutting sword, is it a piercing dagger? Zeal is only another name for charity. A good father does not like to chastise his disobedient son, but love prompts him to do so. And is not the preacher a spiritual father?

True zeal, as we see it in St. John, is prudent, energetic, and yet to some extent, lenient. If St. John saw poor, humble, or ignorant people eager to become instructed—*Et interrogabant eum dicentes: Quid ergo faciemus?*—he had a cheering word for them. To such he promised pardon. They will not have to retire into the desert as did the precursor himself; let them practise justice, give alms, live according to their state of life. All are called to be saints, but sanctity does not imply for all a very austere life, or the performance of heroic deeds. Sanctity consists in doing the will of God, each one according to his vocation.

A truly zealous preacher is not elated by success. He is entirely forgetful of self. An ordinary man might have been tempted to pride or vain-glory on seeing the messengers sent to him, and the unbounded admiration of the multitudes who listened to him. Not so John the Baptist. His soul was filled with humility and confusion. It entered the minds of many that he might be the Messias; even his disciples told him: "He of whom thou gavest testimony, behold He baptizeth and all come to Him."[1] But John reproved them. The more they praised him, the more he humbled himself. Far from wishing to pass as the Messias, he declared that he was not worthy to loose the latchet of His shoe. His sole desire was that they overlook the precursor, and prepare for Him who is to come: *Oportet illum crescere, me autem minui.* Truly that priest deserves little success, O my God, who looks for it more to glorify himself than to glorify his Master. If souls be saved, what is the praise of men to a good priest, the instrument of their salvation?

A truly zealous man is not easily tired; nothing discourages him, neither the frequency of his instructions, nor the ignorance of his hearers. For all he has an answer and a kind word.

A truly zealous man is also brave; he knows no danger, he flatters no one, and if he meets with a Herod, he will not hesitate to say: *Non licet.* To show regard for the dignity or social position of a wicked man is to become, to some extent, an accomplice of his wickedness; for the more exalted a man's position, the greater harm he does by a scandalous mode of living. John's courage in reproving Herod cost him his life; but was not martyrdom the fittest recompense of his holy preaching?

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[1] Cui tu testimonium perhibuisti, ecce hic baptizat, et omnes veniunt ad eum. (John, iii. 26.)

What a model is offered to evangelical preachers in the person of St. John! Thus far in the ministry has my preaching been like his? Have I fought the good fight? Have I in like manner prepared the way for the Lord? Have I ever had that same burning, yet prudent and patient zeal? Have I been humble yet bold in season? Alas! to my confusion, I must confess that things do not stand so well with me. And yet, O my God, who hast intrusted to me the great honor of preaching the Gospel of salvation, how much more favored am I than St. John—for every day I eat Thy flesh and drink Thy most precious blood. O Lord, when Thou didst visit St. John yet unborn, Thy very presence communicated to him "the spirit and virtue of Elias." And will not so many visits from Thee make of me at least a zealous and holy priest, a man according to Thine own heart? Grant me that favor to-day, O Lord, and I will hereafter impart to Thy people the science of salvation. Thou shalt first be born, and then live forever in the souls committed to my care.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Subject of John's preaching.

I. Penance as a means of making souls abandon the ways of sin. Penance is necessary. No other way for the sinner to satisfy his offended God. Penance must be sincere and show itself by the fruits thereof. "Bring forth fruits worthy of penance." Woe to him who postpones it. The barren tree will be cut down and cast into the fire.

II. Lead souls to Christ after having moved them to penance. Point out to the world its loving Redeemer. "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world!" Oh, how painful it is for a good priest to see the Lord so little known, so little loved!

Second Point.—John's zeal in preaching the word of God. His zeal is an ardent and fearless one. It moves guilty souls to penance, it prevents scandal and puts an end to the direful effects of scandal: *Ignitum eloquium tuum vehementer.* It is prudent and not offensive, though at times very vehement. With God, pardon is easy. All are called to a life of sanctity. John is not elated by success; true zeal is humble. When all are in admiration of his doctrine, John thinks only of humbling himself. Nothing could daunt his holy zeal; he died a martyr to his duty, rather than cease to preach the Redeemer and the truths which lead to heaven.

Another meditation for the same day: Spiritual joy. (Vol. I, p. 679.)

Fourth Sunday of Advent.

MEDITATION IV.

LIFE OF JESUS IN THE WOMB OF MARY.

The mystery of the Incarnation is accomplished. For nearly nine months Mary has carried in her womb the Son of God, and now the time is near at hand when the Redeemer is to be born. The Church at the beginning of the office says no longer: *Regem venturum Dominum, venite, adoremus,* but, *Prope est jam Dominus, venite, adoremus.* Sweeter still and more cheering is her voice as we approach the day of the manifestation of the Son of God to man. "Blow the trumpet in Sion. . . . For the day is near at hand, behold He cometh, Alleluia! Alleluia!" At vespers, also, she breathes forth her soul in a prayer of most profound adoration and fondest love: "O eternal wisdom! . . . O Adonai! O Emmanuel!" He, so long the expected of nations, rests in Mary's womb, and there, as in a holy shrine, the most fitting temple He could find on earth, He teaches us more lessons than one, for—

1.—*He Offers Himself a Sacrifice to His Father.*
2.—*He Commences the Great Work for which He is Come, Namely, the Salvation of Mankind.*

First Point.—In the womb of Mary Jesus offers Himself a sacrifice to His Eternal Father. From the very moment His soul is united to His body in the womb of Mary, and "the Word was made flesh," He commences the work of the Redemption. From the first moment, enjoying as He does, the beatific vision, and having at the same time the complete use of His mental faculties, He embraces the eternal glory of His Father and the wretchedness of man, the offender, and offers Himself as a victim of adoration and atonement. He accepts from the hands of Providence whatever is destined for Him, even the bitter chalice of sufferings and humiliations by which He is to make reparation for man's transgression. "Therefore, coming into the world, He saith: Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not, but a body Thou hast fitted to Me. . . . Then said I, behold I come, that I shall do Thy will, O God." (Heb. x. 5, 7.) And the work commenced in the womb of Mary He continues all His lifetime. In all the mysteries that mark His life, His birth, His circumcision, the flight into Egypt, each step He takes, all will be the same offering of His own person

to the Father. His heart speaks, saying: "In the head of the book it is written of Me, that I should do Thy will; O my God, I have desired it, and Thy law in the midst of my heart." (Ps. xxxix. 9.)

Soon the angels will come to bring good tidings of great joy to the world; but we may even now give vent to our joy, for our yet unborn God thinks of reconciling us to His Father. He already loves us. The offended majesty is already satisfied. From the moment the Son of God became man, the Eternal Father found one to render Him the honor and adoration due His infinite perfections. Let us join our praise to that of Jesus, and it will then be most acceptable to the Father.

Let us learn here to esteem, to cherish the glory of God, and let us look for nothing in this life but the promotion of that glory. Oh, the glory of God! How truly great is he who is ever actuated by regard for its advancement. Such a man lives and acts, in a measure, like God Himself, of whom we read, *Universa propter semetipsum operatus est Dominus.* (Prov. xvi. 14.) How dear is such a man to God, for he loves Him with a most perfect love, and forgets himself in order to do His holy will. And yet, after all, he renders the greatest service to himself, for every smallest, most insignificant action is done in the state of grace and for the love of God, thus becoming of immense value for eternity. The eternal glory of God! If I had had it always in my heart, if it had always been the motive of my conduct, what peace, what contentment would I enjoy even on this side of the grave! I would have fulfilled the end for which I was created. All would be with me according to God's plan, I would have peace and contentment, for it is written: "The fruit of justice is peace."[1] Peace of heart is promised to the man of good will, and he is a man of good will who looks only to God's glory.[2]

Second Point.—Jesus in Mary's womb commences the work for which He has come, namely, the salvation of mankind. God is truly glorified by His creatures, if they so know Him, love Him, and serve Him during this life, that He may reward them with eternal happiness in the next. This is that sacred fire which Jesus brought into the world, that fire which He is eager to kindle in every heart. The utter desolation of mankind, sitting in the darkness and shadow of death, contaminated by all sorts of crimes, is always present to Him. So many unfortunate souls rushing headlong to perdition! What a torture for His loving heart! Oh,

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[1] Erit opus justitiae pax. (Is. xxxii. 17). Pax multa diligentibus legem tuam. (Ps. cxviii.)

[2] (Ps. xviii. 6.)

when will He commence the work of salvation? When will He begin to run in the race?

That great work He even now begins. He suggests to Mary to take Him to the house of Zachary, that He may sanctify His precursor by His divine presence, fill Elizabeth with the Holy Ghost, and pour His choicest blessings on all the members of that household. But this is not all He does for the fulfilling of His great mission, the Redemption of man. He submits to the will of His Father. Inclosed in the womb of Mary, He offers to God His captivity and His humiliations. He asks and obtains those graces that will be granted to the priests of God even till the end of time.

How many false ideas many of us have concerning what goes to constitute and to strengthen true zeal, to facilitate the work of sanctifying souls.

We work hard, but pray very little; hence our poor success. We lose sight of God, relying wholly upon ourselves. God abandons us to our own resources—exactly a repetition of what took place in Judea. A preacher expends his best efforts and meets with no success, while an unborn child brings down blessings upon mankind, and lays the foundation of that Church which will soon renew the face of the earth.

A priest is never without an opportunity of doing good. His breviary, the Holy Mass, religious exercises, his very sufferings and infirmities, his trials and the obscurity of his life—all these he turns to a profitable account for himself and others. How much good we can do in secret, unknown to the world, as unnoticed as was Jesus while resting in Mary's womb!

O my God, give me a heart like Thine, a heart dead to all but Thee alone, that I may be consumed by the fire of Thy charity. Give me a heart burning for Thy glory and the salvation of souls; yes, my God, give me such a heart, but grant me also to be patient, that I may learn to await the time appointed by divine Providence. May I be guided by divine grace rather than by natural impulses. Teach me, O Lord, the real value of the souls Thou comest to redeem, and how the glory of God is procured by their conversion; let this be my only ambition, when alone or in public, in the work of the ministry or in the solitude of prayer and meditation, that I may ever labor for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Jesus in the womb of Mary offers Himself to His Father. From the first moment of His existence, the Word

offered Himself to the Father as a victim of adoration, praise, and atonement. At each step He will take in life, His heart will always say to the Father: "Behold, I come!" Let us learn here from our unborn Saviour to esteem the glory of God, and to always look for it in all our undertakings. Ah, the glory of God! Had I always been actuated by it, what contentment, what happiness would be mine to-day. All things would be well with me, I would be a man of good will; and it is only to such that peace is promised.

Second Point.—Jesus in the womb of Mary commences the work of the Redemption. Jesus, yet unborn, sees the deplorable condition of mankind. What a torment for His loving heart! He commences immediately the work of Redemption; and how? By prayer. He teaches us by His example to be satisfied with an obscure and humble life, He suggests to His Mother to take Him to the house of Zachary that He may sanctify the precursor and his mother, and pour a blessing on all in that household. O my God, how much good one can do in secret, remaining unknown to men, as Jesus was when in the womb of His blessed Mother.

Christmas Eve.

MEDITATION V.

JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM.

1.—*Journey Foreordained by God in His Wisdom and Goodness.*
2.—*Undertaken and Accomplished by Jesus in a Spirit of Obedience and Perfect Resignation.*

First Prelude.—Try and place before your mind the whole world set astir by the edict of the Roman Emperor, while a multitude of the celestial army surrounds the humble house at Nazareth; for He who is the occasion and the cause of all this stir is there.

Second Prelude.—Let me, I beseech Thee, O Lord, both know and cherish the paternal ways of divine Providence, that I may always be submissive, following the examples of Mary and Joseph.

First Point.—Journey foreordained by God in His wisdom and goodness. Cæsar Augustus, the Roman Emperor, is at peace with the conquered world. He is eager to know the number of his subjects, the extent and strength and riches of the country under his sway. He orders that a general census be taken. That order is executed and his pride is gratified. But herein is shown the depth of eternal wisdom! While he thinks only of gratifying

his ambition and pride, he is, in spite of himself, preparing the ways of the Lord and the proof of His divine mission, according to what had been prophesied centuries before.

Mary is at Nazareth; the days of her delivery are near at hand, and she thinks not of leaving Nazareth, though she well knows that Bethlehem is the place where, according to the prophets, Jesus is to be born. She remains at home, under the roof of her spouse. And yet, in order the better to instruct man and draw him to love his God, the Son of God is to be born in a stable. Mary is the wife of a poor tradesman. The Holy One that is to come must be a member of the royal family of David; the name of the child must be recorded, so that the documents may show, in an authentic manner, the date and place of His birth, that the whole world may bear testimony to the perfect accomplishment of Messianic prophecy. Finally, the long-expected Messias is to be born in the most abject poverty and destitution. He who is to establish a kingdom not of this world, is destined to give an example of humility, patience, voluntary poverty, and Christian self-abnegation.

All is arranged by the hand of God; God's almighty power executes the plan devised by His wisdom. Obedient to the edict of Cæsar, Mary goes to Bethlehem to be registered, where, owing to the great crowd of strangers, she is unable to find a lodging-place. Thus it is that "all things turn into good to them who love God." (Rom. viii. 28.) All events, whether of great or small importance, virtues as well as vices, the ambition of Augustus and the humility of Mary, all tend to execute the designs of Almighty God. Oh, what consolation and what treasures of merit will be Joseph's and Mary's at the end of this journey, which, to a worldly minded person, seems undertaken amid such trying circumstances. "It is good to confide in the Lord, rather than to have confidence in man. . . . It is good to trust in the Lord, rather than to trust in princes." (Ps. cxvii. 8, 9.)

Second Point.—Obedience and submission of Mary and Joseph on the journey to Bethlehem. At the command of Augustus the whole empire "went to be enrolled, every one into his own city." Joseph and Mary did not claim exemption, though they might well have done so. The sublime dignity of the Virgin, the far-surpassing dignity of Him whose Mother she was soon to be, the hardship of such a journey in her present condition, all these reasons they could have put forth. But they did not. The two holy consorts obey the command of the emperor; they see therein the command of God Himself, and make not a moment's delay. "And Joseph went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea to the

city of David . . . with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child."

Many trials were to come during the journey, and especially at its end. But Mary and Joseph were prepared to meet them, and remained full of confidence. Up to that day they had relied on God as children rely on their parents, and they were not disappointed. But in the present circumstance they have an unlimited confidence in the Almighty, for Mary carries in her virginal womb the Master of the universe. Well might she say with even greater truth than David: "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me." (Ps. xxii. 4.)

O my soul, do you realize the truth of these words: "When Jesus is near, all goes well, and nothing seems difficult"? (Imit. l. 2, c. vii.) To-day my confidence should be greater than ever. Mary is about to give birth to Jesus. Already we have said in our office: *Venite, exultemus Domino. . . . Hodie scietis quia veniet, Dominus, et mane videbitis gloriam ejus.* A few hours more and we will commemorate the great event.

And when does Jesus come to us more truly than in this solemnity of Christmas, on which we celebrate three Masses and receive Him as many times in the most intimate manner?[1] One would say that the fittest abiding-place for God is in the heart of a priest. And if that heart be pure, if you really long for that blessed moment, how happy, how rich you are soon to become. Almighty God, grant that, having waited with a longing heart for the coming of Thy Son, we may receive with joy Him who liveth and reigneth with Thee for ever and ever. Amen. (*Secret.*)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Journey arranged by the goodness and wisdom of God. Cæsar thinks only of gratifying his ambition, but he is preparing the proofs of the divinity of the mission of Christ without knowing it. The prophets had foretold that the Messias was to be born in Bethlehem, that He was to be recognized among men as the Son of David; that He was to establish a kingdom, not of this world, but one founded on humility, patience, and suffering. All is in the hands of God, and He makes all things concur in the

[1] Quam felix es, sacerdos, cui hodie non semel tantum, sed ter ascendere licet ad mensam Domini, ut vires labore fractas iterato reficias pabulo vitae aeternae! (Scut. fid., 25 decem.) Nullus, excepto die Nativitatis Domini, praesumat nisi unam missam celebrare in die quia felix est qui celebrat digne unam. (Con. Tolet., an. 1324.)

accomplishment of His designs—the ambition of Cæsar as well as the humility of the Virgin. What an immense consolation was to accrue to Mary and Joseph from that journey undertaken in the face of such distressing circumstances!

Second Point.—Obedience and confidence of Mary and Joseph during the journey to Bethlehem. The holy consorts had reasons which were more than sufficient to exempt them from the journey; but all power comes from God, and they obey the Roman Emperor as they would God Himself. They at once depart. They foresee the trials in store for them, but they trust in God. What evils should they fear? Mary was carrying the Lord and Maker of the universe. Thou, too, O my soul, shalt soon possess Him. O how sweet for a priest in his communion on Christmas night!

Christmas.

MEDITATION VI.

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Consider the Persons.*
2.—*Listen to the Words Spoken.*
3.—*Consider also the Actions.*

First Prelude.—"And Joseph . . . went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child. And it came to pass that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." (Luke, ii.)

Second Prelude.—Picture to yourself the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem: a long and difficult one. Consider next the grotto of the Nativity: wherein all was cheerless destitution and poverty.

Third Prelude.—Beg of God to enable you to penetrate the meaning of this mystery, in order the better to love and follow in the steps of the new-born King, who came to free us from the darkness and the slavery of sin, and to point out for us an entirely new mode of life.

First Point.—Consider the persons present. In the streets of Bethlehem you may discern a long stream of people moving in every direction; strangers coming and going; friends meeting friends; all taken up with the things of this world. On the other hand, consider the Virgin plunged in silent rapture at the thought of the mystery known to herself alone. Behold her on the way. She seeks shelter in the inn, but there is no room for her. In the grotto what celestial brightness lights up her countenance; how calm, how modest, how patient, how close the union between her and her God! And Joseph; seemingly a man accustomed to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, yet not without a certain dignity. Compare the recollection of Joseph with the bustle surrounding him. Sorrow is depicted on his countenance as he sees night fast approaching, and his incomparable virgin spouse unable to find shelter. How more than sad he must have been when, pointing to the stable, he seemed to indicate that there alone they might expect to find a resting-place. O admirable Joseph, a few minutes more and consolation will be thine! But consider in a special manner the One that is going to make His appearance in this world. Who ever would dream that He is the Son of a King, the King of kings? Where is the palace, where, at least, is the cradle prepared to receive Him? Like all other children, His entrance into the world was made in tears, but never was there a child born in the midst of such privation and suffering, and never will there be. What destitution! Even the necessaries of life are not to be found. The season is the severest of the year, and He has no other shelter than that afforded by an abandoned stable, falling to ruin and open to storm and wind. And still He is the Messias, the long, long-expected Messias; the One called in the Scriptures the wonderful God, the God of strength, He whom angels carry on their wings. He is the Redeemer of the world and the Master of the universe. In a few moments we are to fall at His knees and to invite all creatures to bow down before Him in adoration. *Christus natus est nobis, venite, adoremus.* We shall have to listen to His words and study Him as a model, for "He is the light coming into the world to expel darkness, and woe to the darkness if it heeds not the light." [1]

Second Point.—Listen to the words spoken. Joseph and Mary heard the conversation of the crowd around them, vain and often sinful conversation. Take heed to these two holy consorts; they converse together, but how edifying their words! All they say concerns Jesus and His welfare. Joseph in a meek and honest

[1] (John i. 5.)

tone of voice craves for a single night's shelter. It is rudely denied him, he is pitilessly sent away. Mary consoles him and thanks him for all he does in her behalf. However, her words are few, for her heart, beating stronger than usual, tells her the time is near at hand, the Saviour is to be born. When He is really born into the world, O Mary, O Joseph, tell us what were then your words, especially those coming from your hearts? What did Jesus say to His Father, to Mary, to Joseph? What does He say to me? What answer shall I make? Can I refuse Him anything He may ask?

Third Point.—Consider also the actions. You may here consider the facts; how promptly the two holy pilgrims left Nazareth, how patient they were during the journey, how resigned when they arrived at Bethlehem, and saw all doors closed against them. Whither will they go to find shelter after their wearisome journey? After sympathizing with Mary and Joseph in their trials, after praising their courage, you may well envy their good fortune. The poor stable becomes transformed into a paradise. Christ is now born. The ripe, life-giving fruit is detached from the tree without an effort; the lightning flashes from the unshriven cloud; Christ is born of the Virgin Mary. He came forth from Mary's womb, just as He will arise from the grave on the day of His Resurrection. And now what feelings of joy swell the heart of Mary! The little child, her Son, is at the same time the eternal Son of God, her God, true God of true God. She is wrapped in an ecstasy of love and veneration. She presses the infant to her heart, presses her God to her bosom, showers on Him her maternal caresses. She wraps Him up in swaddling-clothes, lays Him in the manger, falls on her knees in prayerful adoration.[1] In the name of all mankind she thanks Him. But how she must have thanked Him for all the glorious privileges granted to herself. How eager she is to wait on Him. The feelings of Mary are shared by Joseph. Like Mary, in all humility, he gives Jesus thanks for the great mission entrusted to him. O my new-born Saviour, what an immense love Thou didst kindle in these two hearts, so pure, so holy, so devoted.

Now address yourself to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph; speak in all simplicity, tell them the feelings meditation on this mystery creates in you. Ask that your own heart may be moved at the sight of your God just now born for you, and reflect on that life which, begun in a manger, is to end on a cross. May you learn also where to look for true pleasures, greatness, and riches. O how different are the ways of God from the ways of men. "Save me, O Lord, for there is now no saint, truths are decayed from

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[1] Suaviatur ac liquescit anima ejus in complexu nati. (Ludov. de Pont.)

among the children of men." (Ps. xi. 1.) During these days go often in spirit to the manger in Bethlehem; there you will find the new-born Saviour; learn from Him "the science of salvation," ask for the grace of its acquisition. After Holy Mass remember that you possess within you the God of the manger; this thought will inspire you with great confidence, and such confidence God will surely reward.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Consider the persons present. On the way, the streets of Bethlehem are crowded with strangers, who come and go, friends with friends; in fact, all the citizens of the little village are occupied with their own affairs. You see Mary, all wrapped up in the mystery known only to herself, how calm, how resigned; and Joseph, who points in sadness to the stable as the only place of shelter. Consider also the One who is about to make His entrance into the world. Where is His palace, or, at least, His cradle? He is the Light of the world. To-day consider His example; later on you will hear His words.

Second Point.—Listen to the words spoken. Listen first to the words spoken by the crowd, resounding in the ears of the holy consorts. Listen next to Mary and Joseph—the few words which pass between them. Joseph asks for shelter; it is roughly refused. Mary consoles and comforts him. When Jesus is born, listen to the language of their hearts. Listen to the words of Joseph and Mary to the infant God, listen to the words of the Son of God to His eternal Father, to Mary and to Joseph. Listen, for He speaks to you also; what answer do you make?

Third Point.—Consider also the actions. How obedient are the two holy pilgrims; they leave Nazareth; how resigned they are at Bethlehem; how happy they are when Christ is born. Consider the conduct of Mary and Joseph. They give praise and adoration to the Son of God made man. O Jesus, what an immense fire of love Thou didst kindle in these hearts so pure, so holy, so devoted! Address yourself to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. The great truth gleaned from the foregoing meditation is this: How different are God's ways from those of men.

MEDITATION VII.

THE SHEPHERDS VISIT THE MANGER.

1.—*Apparition of the Angel.*
2.—*The Shepherds go to Bethlehem.*
3.—*They Return from Bethlehem.*

First Prelude.—"And there were in the same country shepherds watching and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them; and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will. . . . And they came with haste and they found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in a manger . . . . and the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God, for all the things they had heard and seen." (Luke, ii.)

Second Prelude.—Imagine you see the country-place where these shepherds kept the night-watches over their flock. Contemplate them starting on their way to Bethlehem, and finally contemplate the stable and the manger.

Third Prelude.—Try to enter into the feelings of these poor people who were the first to adore Christ, that you also may share the many blessings they received on that occasion.

First Point.—Apparition of the angel. Who were the first to be called to see the Redeemer, and in what manner were they called?

I. There is not, there never can be the least contradiction in the conduct of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He is born poor, and the poor are the first to be called; His first favors are for them, and they will always be His dearest friends. He sends no angel to kings and the wealthy of the world, but He sends angels to the poor, hard-working, and watchful shepherds; and St. Gregory tells us, in these He sees the future shepherds of His Church.[1] The poor,

[1] Quid est quod vigilantibus pastoribus angelus apparet, eosque Dei

the humble ones of this world are dear to Him. He will live like one of them for the space of thirty years, and when that day dawns on which He will go out to preach the kingdom of God, they will be the first to hear Him; it is to preach the Gospel to the poor that His Father hath sent Him: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me.* (Luke, iv. 18.) His mission is one of humility. He knows that the wealthy and proud will take offence at His conduct, but He will not change the plan prepared from all eternity; He will sooner die. And you, Priest of God, do you follow the example of God on this subject? Do you love those He loved? Is it among the poor and humble of this world that you find your delight? When you preach the Gospel, are you fond of instructing the unlearned, do you put yourself on a level with those poor hungry souls? In the confessional, do you welcome them with the kindness, the tenderness of a father? When called on to direct them in the way of perfection, have you ever been of the opinion that perfection is not for such as these, because they can not give much time to meditation and contemplation? It is a well-known fact that the unlearned are more apt to attain perfection, because they understand so well the mystery of the cross, trained as they are to daily hardships and sufferings.

II. The shepherds are surrounded with a great light; they see an angel, and the sight fills them with terror.[1] When Almighty God is pleased to visit a soul, He first sends a certain terror into that soul to make it humble, but soon that fear is succeeded by a holy confidence, "Fear not," seems to whisper this heavenly visitor to the poor shepherds, "I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to you and to all the people. They have been expecting the Messias. Behold He is come; to-day is born to you a Saviour at Bethlehem. How shall you know Him, that great and long-expected Redeemer? You shall find a child wrapped in swaddling-clothes and laid in a manger." Yes; that Infant is the Messias. The swaddling-clothes are the insignia of His majesty, the manger, His throne. The pride of man is here crushed, and here it is that Thou dost really commence Thy mission, O Saviour of mankind. Open our eyes, that we may know the three marks of the new-born King: humility, *Invenietis infantem;* poverty, *pannis involutum;* self-mortification, *positum in praesepio.*

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claritas circumfulget, nisi quod illi prae caeteris videre sublimia merentur, qui fidelibus gregibus praeesse sollicite sciunt; dumque ipsi pie super gregem vigilant, divina super eos gratia largius coruscat. (St. Greg., homil. viii.)

[1] Ecce angelus Domini stetit juxta illos et claritas Dei circumfulsit illos et timuerunt timore magno. (Luke, ii. 9.)

Second Point.—The shepherds go to Bethlehem. The shepherds have heard the words spoken by the angel. However strange they are, still they trust to the wisdom, power, and goodness of God; and, guided only by the feelings of their grateful hearts, they say to one another: "Let us pass over to Bethlehem in search of the new-born Saviour: *Transeamus usque Bethlehem, et videamus hoc Verbum quod factum est, quod Dominus ostendit nobis.* The angels had given them no command—a fervent soul needs no command; to point out the good to be done is enough; it well knows that good inspirations are like messages from God.

Scarcely has the angel disappeared when the shepherds depart; wise and prudent, they go with haste: *Venerunt festinantes.* The Lord has been pleased to speak and to make Himself known to them: *Dominus ostendit nobis;* how prompt their obedience. *Amans volat currit et laetatur.*" (Imit. l. iii. c. v.) When, O my God, shall I be concerned with the things that concern Thee? when shall I, under the pressure of Thy love, forget created beings? when shall I forget myself in order to search for Thee with the same eagerness as that of the shepherds? "They found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant, who was lying in the manger"—a fit reward for their simplicity and obedience. The utter poverty of the infant God does not discourage them. Far from it. Rather it encourages them to approach the Saviour who is so easy of access. They give themselves up to prayer and contemplation, and they show Him respect and veneration to the best of their ability. These good people spent the whole time they were at the grotto in meditation, though they scarcely knew what meditation is. They gave themselves to the infant God, and He, finding no obstacle on their part, spoke to their willing hearts. Let us be as willing as they, and Jesus will act in us at the time of meditation as He did in them.

Third Point.—The shepherds return from Bethlehem. The shepherds could not and did not keep to themselves what they had heard and seen. Gratitude prompted them to speak. All wondered at what these simple people, whose veracity no one would think of contesting, told about the birth of Christ, the apparition of the angel, the canticle of joy sung by the heavenly host: *Omnes qui audierunt mirati sunt* . . . they wondered, they were surprised. But wonder and surprise were not enough. They could and ought to have gone to see for themselves. They could have offered a place of shelter to the new-born Redeemer; for what proof of belief is there in merely wondering at the magnificence of God's works? God expects more than admiration: He expects man to co-operate with the grace He gives.

The world, the blind and sensual world, took little notice of

what was of such interest to all; but Mary, ever faithful and attentive, lost nothing of what was going on. She heard the shepherds speaking with rapture of the vision, and she kept all they said in her heart, as it were, to feed and increase the fire of love divine within her. And in this she teaches us how to meditate on the mysteries connected with our dear Lord. The shepherds returned with hearts overflowing with joy; they told everywhere what they had seen and heard; they praised and glorified God more by the sanctity of their lives than by the eloquence of their words. It is a sure sign that you draw profit from your meditation and the performance of your sacred duties when, after one or the other, you feel burning within you the desire of procuring the glory of God, and making Him known to your fellow men. May you go to the altar to-day as the shepherds went to the stable. Go with their dispositions, and you may expect even greater favors from the infant God.

Gaudens et exultans, O pater aeterne, transibo usque Bethlehem, ad domum panis illius suavissimi, qui descendit de coelo et dat vitam mundo. Festinanter advolabo ad altaris tui praesepium, ubi Filium tuum, Jesum meum, sub panis specie velatum habeo, quem multi reges olim atque prophetae voluerunt videre et non viderunt. Illuc propero laetus, ut videam hoc grande verbum, atque stupendum amoris tui miraculum. Introibo ad altare tuum, optime Pater, ut immolando hostiam laudis, tibi gratias agam pro magna misericordia tua, quam in Nativitate Verbi incarnati, non solum pastoribus illis vigilantibus, sed et nobis sacerdotibus, cunctisque peccatoribus exhibuisti. Respice, Pater, Unigenitum tuum, infantem amabilem, propter nos jacentem et vagientem in praesepio . . . . ; fac ut, illorum more pastorum, fide humili accedamus ad tractandum mysterium fidei, quod abscondisti a sapientibus et revelasti parvulis. (Scut. fid. t. 1, p. 304.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—An angel appears to the shepherds. The Redeemer is born poor: the poor will always be His dearest friends. He sends an angel as a messenger to the poor. "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." Let us love the poor and the lowly; let us be poor and lowly ourselves. The shepherds are frightened at the apparition of the angel, but the angel comforts them by telling them a Saviour is born to them, and he tells them, moreover, by what signs they shall know Him, namely, humility, poverty, suffering. Glory be to God in the stable of Bethlehem, peace be to men of good will; good tidings of great joy to all men of good will!

Second Point.—The shepherds go to Bethlehem. The shepherds believe what the angel has just announced, and they are

eager to see the new-born Saviour. They go in haste. O holy obedience! When called, let us hasten in search of Jesus. They find Mary and Joseph, with the Child who was lying in the manger. How grateful, how loving the shepherds show themselves on this occasion! Jesus Himself, as it were, inspires them to pray. Let us be as simple and Jesus will pray with us and for us.

Third Point.—The shepherds return from Bethlehem. With hearts overflowing with joy they tell everywhere of the nativity of the Messias, and all are enraptured by what they hear from the shepherds. But it was not enough to listen with admiration. What will it profit a man to wonder at the magnificence of God's works, unless he co-operate with the grace of God? Mary lost nothing of what was going on. The shepherds went home praising and glorifying God, and this they did more by the sanctity of their lives than by the eloquence of their language.

MEDITATION VIII.

THE SHEPHERDS VISIT THE MANGER.

CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons.*
2.—*Consider what They Say.*
3.—*Consider what They Do.*

Preludes.—The same as in the previous meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. In a country-place, an angel appears, surrounded with great light. Who is he? A heavenly prince, a messenger from Almighty God. His countenance is beaming; he comes to bring tidings of great joy. The shepherds are people poor in every way, far from expecting the good fortune just come to their lot. They are a quiet, peaceable, upright class of people, ready to welcome the Messias as it may please God to make Him known to them. O Lord, these are the ones with whom Thou lovest to commune: *Cum simplicibus sermocinatio ejus.* (Prov. iii. 32.) The inns and private houses of Bethlehem are filled with crowds of strangers; perhaps some of Joseph's or Mary's relatives are among them, descendants also of holy King David, but they fail to notice Mary and Joseph on account of their poverty. Rich, proud, voluptuous people, sordid worshipers of Mammon, being degraded by every vile passion, are able to find a place for the night, but the purest and holiest of God's creatures, where is

she to find a lodging-place? Oh, go in spirit to the wretched stable! There you will find Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Jesus, the Son of God, the splendor of the eternal glory of the Father, is there. He is there, a little infant stretched on the straw, wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and pierced with the cold of a winter's night. The holy Virgin and St. Joseph can not for a second take their eyes from Him; angels are in adoration before their God and King; and you, wherefore have you come to this sorrowful scene? What are your feelings at the sight? What profit do you expect to reap from your spiritual visit?

Second Point.—Consider what they say. First hear the angel addressing the shepherds. These are terror-stricken: *Nolite timere*, fear not, he says. The mystery of the Nativity begets no terror—rather a holy trust in God. Heaven on such a day sends a blessing to every one: *Hodie per totum mundum melliflui facti sunt coeli.* (Offic.) God coming to us in this lowly condition, urges us to love and not to fear Him: *Evangelizo vobis gaudium magnum;* the great event has taken place. *Natus est vobis hodie Salvator;* and it is for you He comes, He is your Redeemer. *Et hoc vobis signum,* and this shall be a sign to you, to you poor and simple as you are: *vobis* to you. *Vobis humilibus, vobis obedientibus, vobis non alta sapientibus, vobis vigilantibus et in lege Dei meditantibus.* (St. Bern.)

What answer do the shepherds make to these words of the angel? They do not even think of giving an answer. They are wholly taken up with Jesus. They say to each other: "Let us go and see."[1] What do they say at the sight of the holy family? What are the words of Mary and Joseph to the shepherds? But above all what does Jesus Himself say to the hearts of these poor visitors? What do the shepherds say when about to leave the stable? How do they express their gratitude? Listen, moreover, to the hymn the angels are singing, and let your heart experience the peace they announce to the world: *Pax hominibus.* At last the majesty of God, His eternal justice are satisfied; there is no longer war between heaven and earth. True, the sins of the world cry to heaven for vengeance, but the wailings of the Infant in the manger reach the tender heart of the Father of mercies. Peace, says the angel, between man and man. Christ is come to make them brethren; peace to all. His coming banishes the remorses of sinful man and conquers his passions, and to obtain this heavenly peace it is only necessary to have a good will. The angels do not say, Peace on earth to the just and holy, or peace to the repenting

[1] Transeamus usque Bethlehem, et videamus hoc. verbum. (Luke, ii. 15.)

sinner; no, but they say, Peace to men of good will. When one has a good will, a will in accord with the will of God, he may count on possessing the peace promised from on high.

Third Point.—Consider what they do. The angels rejoice at the happiness of the shepherds; they rejoice as if it were a joy added to their own. The shepherds, true to their avocation, were watching: *erant vigilantes.* The first duty of a shepherd is to watch over his flock. Had they been negligent in this point, they would neither have been favored with the angel's vision, nor the first blessings of the Saviour. See how attentive they are to the first word concerning the mystery; how docile; they ask no questions, they raise no objections, they have nothing to say. God has spoken, that suffices. How united they are; they encourage one another, all seem to have but one heart, one desire to go and see the new-born Redeemer. They are not slow to start. *Festinantes:* They go with haste. They do not even wait till the break of day—they go immediately. I make no progress, O my God. I am always in a state of spiritual infirmity. But no wonder, I am so slow to start, my efforts are so insignificant.

What did the shepherds find at Bethlehem? *Invenerunt Mariam, et Joseph, et Infantem positum in praesepio.* At this sight they fall upon their knees, and lovingly gaze upon the divine Infant. They praise Him, they adore Him, offer Him their humble presents. Mary and Joseph receive and kindly welcome them. Jesus inspires His blessed Mother to allow them to come nigh unto Him, that they may fondly and respectfully caress Him. Behold, He is in their arms, and He fills their hearts with divine love! What a sight, what a fitting recompense for their generous obedience and ardent faith! Why have I so little faith, why is my faith so weak? These poor shepherds see before them but a poor Infant. Can it be that this is the Redeemer of the world? Not a shadow of doubt in their minds, with all the earnestness of their souls they make an act of faith. True, the angels had instructed them beforehand; but the angels have instructed me too, and I have the word of God Himself and the teachings of His holy Church also. It is not instruction that is wanting, but strength and courage to profit by all I know; grant me this courage, O my God, and no happiness can equal mine.

O my God, who could ever tell the joy Thou must have felt when Thou sawest these poor people at Thy feet? How Thou must have been moved at their candor and simplicity, and lavished Thy favors upon them! I wish to go to the altar to-day with the disposition of the shepherds. I believe as they did, and make my poor reason bow down in the presence of this great mystery. The

poverty which surrounds Thee speaks to me of Thy love for my soul, to what extent Thou hast loved me. The manger, the swaddling-clothes! They speak louder to my heart than the brightness of Thy glory. Receive me as Thou didst receive the shepherds, and give to my heart the peace promised by the angel to men of good will. *Fac, o bone Jesu, ut et ego, et omnes quorum mihi salus cordi est, homines simus bonae voluntatis; ut qui de origine Adami nos damnabiliter esse natos dolemus, gaudeamus de Nativitate tua nos feliciter esse renatos.* (Scut. fid. t. 1, p. 307.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. In the country an angel appears to the shepherds. The shepherds, at first terrified, soon regain their composure. . . In Bethlehem, strangers and inhabitants pass by Mary and Joseph without noticing them, on account of their poverty. In the wretched stable you behold Jesus, the Son of God. Mary and Joseph are wrapped in contemplation, the angels in adoration. What are your feelings at such a sight?

Second Point.—Hear what they say. The angels say: "Fear not." The mystery of to-day is one of love. "A Saviour is born to you." Good tidings for all. "Behold the sign by which you shall know Him." What do the shepherds say on beholding the holy family and when about to leave the stable? Listen to the hymn of the angels, and try to appreciate what they say. "Glory to God, peace to men!" to all men, provided they be of good will.

Third Point.—Consider what they do. How charitable the angels who rejoice with men. How prudent the shepherds. Because they were watching, they were the first to find favor with the new-born Redeemer. They go to Bethlehem. Once there they fall on their knees before the manger, they praise God, they adore Him and offer presents. How are they welcomed? Oh, if I had the same faith, the same candor! O my God, receive me as Thou didst receive the shepherds; give me that peace promised to men of good will.

The Circumcision.

MEDITATION IX.

LESSONS OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

1.—*Christ in the Mystery of the Circumcision.*
2.—*What Lessons He Teaches His Priests.*

While preparing for meditation, let us make a generous offering of ourselves to Almighty God. He loves to receive from us the first fruits of all things He gives us; let us offer to Him this the first day of the year; aye, let us give Him the very first hour.

First Point.—Christ in the mystery of the Circumcision. In the mystery of His Circumcision: 1. He humbles Himself; 2. He suffers; 3. He saves us; He receives the name of Jesus.

I. He humbles Himself. The divinity of Our Lord, His holiness, His eternal generation in heaven, His temporal generation in Mary's womb, scarcely less admirable than the eternal, etc., all these exempted Him from the law of the circumcision; to submit to it is beneath His dignity, and yet He complies with the law—the law that supposes the one that is circumcised to be a sinner. What a humiliation for the God made man! Sin and holiness, sin and the divinity blended together. Surely there seems to be a contradiction in this. But no, for the Son of God is become man in order to save man from sin.[1] He comes to atone for it, so He takes it as a garment; the shameful garment of sin is upon the Son of God. His majesty is veiled, His glorious privileges, His divinity, His eternal holiness, make no exception. He comes to work; the Word made flesh is, as it were, annihilated; in becoming man, He put Himself below the angels; when He takes on this day the name of Saviour, He puts Himself even lower than man, for He takes upon His shoulders the burden of the sins of man. It was on the day of His Circumcision that the words of the Apostle St. Paul, were realized: "Him who knew no sin, He hath made sin for us." (2 Cor. v. 21.) And these others from the same Apostle: "In Thee shall all nations be blessed . . . Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (Gal. iii. 8, 13.)

II. He suffers. From the very first moment of His existence, and while He was yet in Mary's womb, Jesus offered Himself to

[1] "He will free His people from their sins." (Matt. i. 21.)

His Father as the Lamb who was to take away the sins of the world. It was an oblation of Himself, but to-day the sacrifice may be said to begin. His innocent flesh is wounded, His blood flows. To-day He is really priest and victim. With His own blood He enters the Holy of holies: *Per proprium sanguinem introivit semel in sancta.* To-day He gives a few drops only, later He will give the same precious blood to the very last drop. His Circumcision is, as it were, the first act; the sacrifice will one day be completed on the tree of the cross. Even now He may apply to Himself the words of the prophet: *Ego in flagella pratus sum.* I am prepared to suffer; for this I took a human body. As God, I could not suffer, but in order to obtain mercy for man, I became man: *Corpus autem optasti mihi. Tunc dixi; Ecce venio.* (Heb. x. 5, 7.) O children of men, acknowledge your Saviour. I promised to give My life—behold the first drops of My blood are spilled, and how I long to give the last of it for you! O Father, Thy majesty has been offended; revenge Thyself now on Thy Son; strike Him, but spare the children of men!

III. He saves us. Yes, all the children of Adam He saves, for to all that are willing He offers the necessary means of sanctification. He saves us from sin by atoning for our sins. To atone for our transgressions, He submits to a law that never was intended for Him. To free us from pride He humbles Himself, taking unto Himself the resemblance of sinful man. Finally, to atone for our sensuality He condescends to suffer, though but a few days old. "He saves us from sin," says Bossuet, "in forgiving us the sins already committed, next in giving us grace to trespass no more, and finally in taking us to a life where sin is not known."[1] O infant God, Thou mayst well take the name of Jesus, for in Thee is realized all this name implies, and the blood Thou didst shed entitles Thee to it. Yes; take the sweet name of Jesus, that name which speaks of peace and love, and victory and triumph, that powerful name which expels terror, gives hope to the sorrowful heart, and conquers demons. *Tristatur aliquis nostrum? Veniat in cor ejus Jesus, et inde saliat in os; et ecce ad exortum nominis lumen, nubilum omne diffugit, redit serenum.* (St. Bern., serm. xv. super. Cant.) O my beloved Jesus, blessed be Thy name from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof! Blessed be it for ever and ever,[2] that name which is above all other names. But it is always on our lips, for it means salvation: *Omnis quicumque*

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[1] Elev. i, 17th week.

[2] Sit nomen Domini benedictum, ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum. A solis ortu usque ad occasum, laudabile nomen Domini. (Ps. cxii. 2, 3.)

invocaverit nomen Domini, salvus erit. (Rom. x. 13.) *O Jesus mi dulcissime, spes suspirantis animae, te quaerant piae lacrymae, te clamor mentis intimae.* (Offic.)

Second Point.—Lessons which Jesus teaches His priest in the mystery of His Circumcision. On the one hand He teaches them the value of a human soul and the desire He has of saving it; on the other, He teaches how to succeed in the work of saving souls.

I. The value of a human soul. It must be great indeed, since God submits to-day to the cruel knife of circumcision; and one day He will go to Calvary for the souls He values so dearly. When we witness the zeal of the Son of God for the salvation of souls it ought to make us reflect. If Christ does so much, why do we do so little? Find no fault with God, but rather with yourself. Be you, therefore, after the example of your God, more zealous for the salvation of your own soul as well as for that of others.

II. Jesus shows us how to succeed in saving souls. You must practise the spiritual circumcision of the heart, and not the legal one, which He has abolished. The circumcision of the heart, which means the giving up of sinful passions and habits which lead to sin. We know that indulgence in only one of these would be sufficient to cause our eternal damnation. Interior circumcision, by which all that is left in us of the old Adam is extirpated, and we put on the Adam of the New Law. This circumcision can not be dispensed with, for the great reward purchased for us by Our Lord being far above nature, and nothing in this life being able to procure it for us, it follows that grace should conquer nature in order that everlasting life may be ours. Christ says as much Himself to all who wish to be His: *Si quis vult venire post me, abneget semetipsum . . , et sequatur me;* and if it be so for all, how much more truly so for priests: *Qui mihi ministrat me sequatur.* When we are completely dead to ourselves, then we live to Christ; and the more we resemble Him in life, the more apt we will be both to save ourselves and to save others. For that two-fold end we were called to the ministry: *Ipsi enim scitis quod in hoc positi sumus.* (1 Thess. iii. 3.)

Go to the altar on this, the first day of the year, asking of God that you may be completely renewed. Discharge your duties hereafter with great zeal, care, and purity of intention. Act as if you knew that this was to be the last year of your life, and that you were never to see its end. Begin to-day as if you were sure that such was to be the case. This is really a propitious day. Jesus sheds His blood to wash away your sins. His name is the anchor of your hope, and His heart will kindle in yours the fire of divine love.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Jesus in the mystery of His Circumcision. 1. He humbles Himself. Our Lord was in reality exempt from the law of circumcision, for that law supposes the one that is subject to it to be a sinner; and He knew not sin. Sin and the divinity can not go together. But that we might be freed from sin, He took upon Himself the burden of our iniquity; He was, as it were, clothed with our sins, and, therefore, His divinity was veiled for a time. II. He suffers for us. Behold how His precious blood flows; the immolation of the Lamb of God begins to-day. As He consents to-day to be circumcised, so He will one day consent to die on the cross of Calvary. III. He saves us. Yes, He saves all the children of Adam, provided they be willing. In order to atone for our transgressions, He submits to the law of circumcision. To conquer our pride He humbles Himself, and to subdue our love of sensuality He endures suffering. Infant God, Thou mayest well take the name of Jesus. Be Thy name praised from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof.

Second Point.—Lessons taught us by Jesus in the mystery of the Circumcision. In the mystery of His Circumcision Jesus teaches us: 1. The value of a soul. Indeed, when I see the life of my God begun, and spent, and ending in suffering I am obliged to exclaim: Either Jesus has done too much, or I am doing too little. He teaches: 2. The spiritual circumcision, that is to say, mortification and the curbing of our passions. Later in life He will preach: "He that wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself . . . and come and follow Me." If this be the condition for all, how much more indispensable is it for His priests, whom He calls to lead a life of such eminent perfection.

The Epiphany.

MEDITATION X.

FAITH OF THE WISE MEN. CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons.*
2.—*Listen to the Words Spoken.*
3.—*Lend Your Attention to what is Done.*

We will stop to meditate on this mystery for several days. It is a subject on which the Church dwells with pleasure; and, indeed, it is one full of light and instruction. To-day our meditation will be on the general features of the mystery.

First Prelude.—"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold there came Wise Men from the East to Jerusalem saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the East and we have come to adore Him. . . . And Herod, the king, hearing this was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him . . . and the priests being asked about the place of His birth, said He was to be born at Bethlehem . . . the Wise Men start right away, and the star which had disappeared was seen again, and went before them until it came and stood over where the Child was, and seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy, and going into the house they found the Child with Mary, His Mother; and falling down they adored Him, and opening their treasures they offered to Him gifts . . . and having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their own country." (Matt. ii.)

Second Prelude.—Picture to yourself the hilly and deserted roads; at last Jerusalem; Herod's palace; the stable of Bethlehem.

Third Prelude.—The Epiphany, or manifestation, may be termed the festival of Christian belief. Ask of God a lively faith, that you may understand what is meant by grace, and how important it is for us to correspond therewith.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. The star is visible to a great number. Many pause to admire its brightness, yet remain in doubt. Most people pay little attention to it, because they are taken up with other things. Others suspect something mysterious, but do not heed the call of God's grace. After some time the star is not even noticed. But the Wise Men stop to think seriously, and finally resolve to follow God's inspiration. These Magi, or Wise Men, were men of wealth, of very high station in life, some say even kings or rulers in their respective countries. The difficulties in their way were many and trying, but God calls them. See how prompt they are to begin the journey. They leave their families behind them. When they draw near to Jerusalem, behold the star is no longer before them. They come to the city, they enter it. With surprise they learn that the inhabitants know of nothing strange that has happened. They go over to Bethlehem, they see the star resting over the place where the Child is. Why does it rest on so wretched a dwelling? And how they must have felt when at last they beheld the Child after so long a journey! Picture to yourself the inhabitants of Jerusalem, unconcerned at first, then troubled. See Herod and all around him; they are troubled over an event which young and old should have hailed with joy. Pause a while and consider the happy Mother, the incomparable Mary, by the side of her holy consort.

How noble her simplicity, how more than human her modesty, her recollection! The thoughts of Mary and Joseph are not of this world. Their countenances show what they feel at the sight before them. And who is the infant Child in the arms of the Virgin? Let our faith make answer. How mighty in spite of His visible weakness, how rich despite His wretched poverty, how deserving of praise and adoration despite the obscurity that surrounds Him! For in Him and by Him all in heaven and on earth have motion and life.

Second Point.—Listen to the words spoken. Everywhere in the East the people are wondering at the star that has been seen in the heavens. How bright that star! What event does it announce to the world? Perhaps it is the star of Jacob, the harbinger of so much glory for the people of Israel. (Numb. xxii. 17.) Thus speak they all. The Magi were the only ones who said, It is the sign of the new-born King; let us go in search of Him, and receive His first favors. On the way they hear many talking. Questions are asked of them. Whither do they go? whence come they? why did they undertake a journey in so dreary and inclement a season? Some approve of, others laugh at their mission. Not one is heard to say: Let us go also with these to adore the Redeemer. The Wise Men make no mystery of their purpose in coming; they even approach Herod himself: "Where," they ask, "is the new-born King of the Jews? We have seen His star in the East and have come to adore Him." What courage! How little they care for the opinions of others; how frank they are! *Vidimus et venimus.* In the Magi grace is strongly active. The news of their coming and of their inquiries is the sole topic of conversation at the king's palace and among the citizens of Jerusalem.

Herod, with all the cunning and shrewdness of a diplomat, asks them questions. They answer frankly. "Go," says the dissembler, "search diligently for the Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word that I also may come and adore Him." What hypocritical wickedness! *O calliditas ficta O incredulitas impia, O nequitia fraudulenta! sanguis Innocentium, quem crudeliter effudisti, attestatur quid de hoc puero voluisti.* (S. Fulgent., serm. v, de Epiph.) Who, under similar circumstances, would not have been deceived. Few words are spoken in the stable; all hearts beat in loving unison. How expressive the countenances, the flow of tears, nay, the very silence of the adoring Magi!

Third Point.—Consider what is done. Behold the Word made flesh. Consider the Jews, then Herod, and lastly the Magi. On the day of His Nativity, Christ had sent angels to the shepherds to call them to His manger, so eager was He to do good to

mankind. On this day He causes a star to shine in the East, that all who see it may come. Alas, there were only three persons to notice it, three persons to profit by the grace. Ah, what sorrow it must have produced in the heart of Him who had come for all!

By God's will these noble men enter Jerusalem; they speak openly on the subject of their coming, they excite attention. The learned consult the Scriptures and find that the time is accomplished. God wished to spare His people the confusion of being instructed by strangers about events that so directly concerned themselves: the Magi inquire of the Jews where is the new-born Messias. Oh, how more than tender is the mercy of God, and yet men repay His goodness with black ingratitude. Unfortunate creatures! They know the truth, but do not profit by it. Unfortunate as the priests who point out the place where the Messias is born, but fail to go and adore Him; they show the way to others, but go astray themselves. These are they of whom later on the Lord will say: *Dicunt et non faciunt.*

But what does Herod meanwhile? The wretched man is never at rest, not even when seated on a throne. Herod is plotting how he may lay criminal hands on the new-born King, in whom he sees a dangerous rival. He pretends to wish to adore Him; but what can man do against God? Herod's plans will fail. Soon all will know what his design really is, and until the end of time, his name will be held in horror by the coming generations. Such is the fate of all hypocrites.[1]

How noble the conduct of the Wise Men! They act the part of wise men truly; their courage is unwavering; they overcome all difficulties by the faith that is in them. They part with everything in order to obey the call of God; they do not dissemble, even before Herod. Though the star has disappeared, they still continue their journey, and God does not forsake them. They kneel before their King, their God; they know Him to be that poor Child on the straw in the manger, and with great joy they open their treasures, they offer their services. What, then, was their joy that they had come such a distance in spite of the many difficulties in the way. And is it not this the same God whom we visit in the tabernacle and before the altar? How is it that we do not feel toward Him as the Magi did, why do we not offer Him gifts after their example?

Address yourself now to God the Father, and to Jesus, His Son, and to Mary, and lastly to the Wise Men. Adore the Almighty, the all-wise and good God, who wrought so many wonders

[1] Sic viae omnium qui obliviscuntur Deum et spes hypocritae peribit. (Job, viii. 13.)

by His grace. Ask Jesus to accept your offering as He did the offerings of the Magi, and may Mary herself present them to her Son, while we say: *Suscipe, Domine, etc.* (See at the end of this volume.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. Some see the star but do not profit by its apparition. The Wise Men make up their minds to follow the heavenly sign. See how they set out; behold them during the journey; remember the principal events that marked this journey; the inhabitants of Jerusalem; Herod; contemplate the holy Virgin and St. Joseph when the Wise Men arrive. Look at the young Child; He it is that giveth life to all in heaven and on earth.

Second Point.—Listen to what is said. In the East what do they say of the bright apparition, what do the Magi say? What do they hear on their way? When they have come to Jerusalem, how openly they speak of the purpose of their coming, how courageous they show themselves. Think what the hypocrite Herod tells them. In the stable lips are silent, but hearts speak. Yes, the looks, the tears, the very silence in this place, are eloquent.

Third Point.—Consider what is done. The Word made flesh is eager to commence the work of Redemption. He causes a star to shine that all who see may come to Him; how few answer the call! How much He does for the people of Jerusalem! They know the truth, but they heed it not. What criminal scheme is Herod devising? How noble the conduct of the Wise Men. Their unflinching courage is at last fittingly rewarded. Address yourself now to God the Father, and to Jesus and Mary.

MEDITATION XI.

THE EXAMPLE OF THE WISE MEN SHOWS IN A STRIKING MANNER HOW ONE MUST CORRESPOND WITH GOD'S HOLY GRACE.

It is true that by ourselves we can do nothing for our salvation; it is also true that with God's grace we can do all things, and that grace is refused to none. Our co-operation or non-co-operation with this grace is what settles for us the question of eternal happiness or eternal misery. Some refuse the grace of God, others put it off, others grow tired of it. You have here the reason of the

eternal loss of so many thousands of souls. God gave the means of salvation. These means were plenty and efficacious, and yet those souls were lost because they did not co-operate with the graces granted. What lesson can we learn from the conduct of the Wise Men?

1.—*They Follow the Light of Divine Grace.*
2.—*They Follow it Promptly.*
3.—*They Follow it Perseveringly.*

First Point.—They follow the light of divine grace. "The star," says Bossuet, "is inspiration to the heart"; St. Leo calls it *gratiae signum.* How many in the East saw the star, and, satisfied with considering its brightness, never troubled themselves about its mysterious significance? How many profited by its apparition? The Wise Men alone. God calls them to the cradle of His beloved Son; they go forth despite all the difficulties of the undertaking. They are used to a life of comfort and ease. They now face the hardships of a long journey in an inclement season, they must part with all that is near and dear to them in the world, tear themselves from their sorrowing relatives. They must take into consideration the opinion of men, who look upon them as wise men. It seems utter folly in them to leave everything to go in search of the new-born King guided only by a star. The Wise Men trample all objections under foot. They obey the call of God, they follow the light of His grace.

See the conduct of these converts of a day. What a lesson for us who are masters in Israel, the preachers and the guardians of the faith![1] Guided by a star, by that sign given them from above, these laymen, these rulers of their countries, leave all behind them. Cost what it may, they go in search of their God: they go to offer themselves to Him, and to remain with Him. You, priest of God, you have seen more than a star, and have you moved a step? Like the priests of old, who told Herod and the Wise Men where Christ was born, you tell others where God is to be found, but you yourself do not go unto Him. You lead others to the truth and you yourself follow not the truth. We are, says St. Augustine, like the people whom Noe employed in building the ark. The patriarch was saved, but the builders themselves perished because they entered not into the ark: *Similes Fabris arcae Noe; aliis ubi evaderent salvi praestiterunt, et ipsi diluvio*

[1] Sacerdotes . . . fidei magistri, rectae fidei custodes. (S. Cyril. Alex.)

perierunt. (De Epiph., serm. i.) With the Magi we may say: *Vidimus stellam.* Who dares say: *Et venimus?* When moved by the sweet influence of faith, at our meditation, we have sometimes seen with terrified eyes the abyss into which we were being driven by tepidity, *vidimus;* and have we then made an effort to shake off that tepidity, *et venimus?* We have seen the vanity of all created things, but is our heart completely detached from such things? At the end of a day we have seen how many sins we have committed, but were we better the following day? Alas, whither are we going? At the hour of death how shall we feel when we will look back on the many graces given to us, and by which we have not profited.

Second Point.—The Wise Men follow promptly the light of grace. Scarcely have they seen the star when they make haste to follow it. *Vidimus,* this is grace, light to the mind and strength to the heart; *et venimus,* this is co-operation. As soon as they are aware of their duty they perform it. With them there is no transition from conviction to desire, from desire to the plan, and from the plan to its immediate execution.

And in this, according to the teaching of St. Thomas, consists pure and sincere devotion: *Devotio nihil aliud esse videtur, quam voluntas quaedam prompte tradendi se ad ea quae pertinent, ad Dei famulatum.* Let us contemplate—how wise the prompt man, how foolish the man slow and tardy in corresponding with the grace of God. Had they delayed for a few days, who can tell that they would have found the Child? Coming to Jerusalem, they would have heard it said that He was no longer there, that He had gone to a place unknown. If Zaccheus had made no haste when he was commanded, *festinans descende,* who can tell whether he would have had the honor of sheltering under his roof the Master of the universe? Surely he would not have heard the blessed words: *Hodie salus domui huic facta est.*

When God speaks, to hesitate is a sin, the least delay is dangerous; grace has its hour. *Tempus Stellae.* (St. Aug.) He who delays may not have the opportunity of refusing again, the same grace may not be offered the second time. Has Almighty God promised to wait until you are ready? You must accept the grace when it is offered to you. He that is slow in accepting grace shows plainly that he receives it, as it were, against his own will. Obedience in that case is compared to a faded flower, a flower without freshness or perfume. Oh, how patient kind Providence has been with me in spite of all my slowness and criminal apathy!

Third Point.—They follow perseveringly the light of divine grace. As they have been prompt in following the call of Almighty God, so they persevered to the end. The difficulties, the trials they met with, were more than sufficient to discourage any less determined than they. After having accomplished the greater part of the journey, when, in sight of Jerusalem, behold, the star suddenly disappears! They are left alone in a strange land. What a situation! Do they think of returning? No. They continue, guided only by the remembrance of what was once their guide; in other words they follow the truth, and truth is like God, it never changes: *Veritas Domini manet in aeternum.* In the city of Jerusalem they find a cold, indifferent class of people, who care little for the new-born King. The priests and doctors tell coldly of the place of His birth, but do not volunteer to join with them in search of Him. Herod sends them to look for the Child. All these proceedings fill their souls with gloomy and saddening conjectures. But their courage is not abated.

Let us go to Almighty God with a simple heart and a firm hope. We shall not be confounded: *In simplicitate cordis quaerite illum, quoniam invenitus ab his qui non tentant illum.* (Sap. i. 1, 2.) *Qui sustinent te, non confundentur.* (Ps. xxiv. 3.) If we look for God in that way we will be living the life of the just man: *Quaerite Deum, et vivet anima vestra.* (Ps. lxviii. 33.) In the spiritual life God at first draws us by the sweetness of His grace and sensible consolations—we imagine ourselves as firm as rocks: *Ego dixi in abundantia mea: Non movebor in aeternum.* But soon trials overtake us. God is, as it were, hidden from our sight, and we feel no more consolation. Do we love Him less then, or does our God love us less? No; nature only gives way for a time; our self-esteem is crushed. In this emergency what should one do? Trample upon the difficulties, walk in darkness while it lasts, rely on Almighty God. If it is expedient for us, or in keeping with His divine plan, the sweet consolation of former days will come back, the star will be seen again, and our joy will be in proportion to that which we have endured in hours of trial.

Resolution.—I will always show myself ready to follow the inspiration of God; as soon as the star of faith[1] appears I will not delay an instant, for my sanctification and my eternal happiness depend on my fidelity. And Thou, O God, help me that I may persevere. I am prompt enough to desire and to undertake, but how easily I am cast down. The least difficulty, a short deprivation of sensible consolation, and I am discouraged. I no

[1] Quasi stella coeli lux fidei.—(St. Aug., serm. 1 de Epiph.)

longer search for my God, the sweet odor of His perfumes has no longer any attraction.[1] O God, Thou knowest how weak I am, be merciful to me. Nevermore will I refuse Thy grace, nevermore grow tired following Thy inspirations, for well I know it is the only way of salvation: *In aeternum non obliviscar justificationes tuas: quia in ipsis vivificasti me.* (Ps. cxviii.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The Wise Men follow the star and the inspiration of God's grace. They were the only ones to profit by the grace which was offered to all. They were generous, sacrificing all they had, wealth, comfort, country, even reputation—for their conduct was reputed as utter folly by many. Many could say with the Magi, we have seen the star, but how few could say with the same, we have followed it? I know the vanity of created beings and my heart is still taken up with them. At the hour of death what great sorrow I will experience at the thought of the many graces which I allowed to pass me by unheeded.

Second Point.—The Wise Men are prompt to follow the inspiration of God's grace. They have seen: that is grace; they are come: this is co-operation with grace. The duty is no sooner known than they hasten to fulfil it. Let us go to God as soon as He calls. It is dangerous to delay obedience. When God has spoken, the least hesitation is a sin which may cost you your eternal salvation. He that delays shows that he goes to God against his own will, and such obedience can only be likened to a flower that has lost its beauty and its fragrance.

Third Point.—The Wise Men persevere in following God's inspiration. After they had made up their minds, nothing could deter them from carrying into effect the resolution they had taken despite all contradictions and trials. Truth changes not. Why should we not persevere? Trials are in keeping with God's plan. I will always show myself ready to do the will of God as soon as it is made known to me, as soon as I know it by the star of my faith.

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[1] Trahe me post te; curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum. (Cant. i. 3.)

MEDITATION XII.

THE WISE MEN AT BETHLEHEM.

1.—*What the Wise Men Do at Bethlehem.*
2.—*The Gifts they Offer.*
3.—*What they Received in Return for their Gifts.*

First Point.—What the Wise Men do at Bethlehem. They leave Jerusalem as soon as they have learned where the Messias is to be found. And now the star again goes before them, pointing out to them the road they are to follow. This repeated favor of divine Providence fills them with great joy: *Gavisi sunt gaudio magno valde.*

They are at Bethlehem. The star rests over the place where the Child is. But what a place! This wretched stable, unfit even to shelter brute beasts, can it be the dwelling of Him who is the King of kings? The Wise Men have no doubt, and here we see the perfection of their faith. Faith was strong in these men when they undertook the journey, stronger still when they continued after the disappearance of the star, when, not finding Him, they sought Him at Jerusalem, but here at Bethlehem, their faith is what we may venture to call heroic. They enter the stable; something within them tells them that this Child is the Redeemer of the world, that He is God and all the name implies. They take no offence at the poverty that surrounds Him. The swaddling-clothes, the manger, even the weakness of the Child, nothing of what they see clouds their belief. Faith teaches them the greatness of the new-born King, teaches them of what His divine kingdom really consists. They fall on their knees, praising and adoring: *Non illis sordet stabulum, non pannis offenduntur, non scandalizantur tacentis infantia; procedunt, venerantur, adorant.* (St. Bern., serm. i., in Epiph.)

How penetrating the eyes of true faith! These men acknowledge a God of all majesty and power in that humble Child. At the foot of the cross, one day, they will know Him also, in spite of the immense sorrow that accompanies His death. O my God, give me a spark of their faith when I ascend the holy altar. Thou givest light to the humble and lowly, for them Thou hast no secrets. Like the Wise Men I wish to annihilate myself; show to me, as

Thou didst to them, a glimpse of Thy majesty, and the world will be dead to me and my heart will love nothing but Thee.

Second Point.—The gifts they offer. The gifts the Wise Men offer indicate plainly what an exalted idea they have of the Child. Gold means the tribute which is due to temporal kings; they acknowledge Him as the new-born King. Incense is offered to the divinity; they acknowledge Him as God. Myrrh, which is used in preserving the body from corruption, was a figure of His humanity, which was to suffer death for love of us. So the Wise Men acknowledge in the child at Bethlehem their king, their God, their Saviour.

Jesus is all that for us as well as for the Wise Men; let us offer to Him gifts also, and may our hearts be as pleasing to Him as were the hearts of the Wise Men. Charity is sometimes compared in Scripture to gold refined in the fire: *Aurum ignitum, probatum.* (Rev. iii. 18.) We must buy that fire from Jesus and give it back to Jesus: *Suadeo tibi emere a me.* (Ibid.) But how can we purchase it? Bossuet answers: "Love is bought by love. He who already loves, may love still more ardently; in loving your neighbor you learn to love your God." Incense is burned. The perfume of incense is the result of lighting it. Let us annihilate ourselves in the presence of God. Again says Bossuet: "He that denies himself and forgets himself, burns with the love of God; such a one is an incense pleasing to almighty God." In the language of the Church, incense is also an emblem of prayer: *Dirigatur oratio mea, sicut insensum in conspectu tuo.* Myrrh represents mortification; this last preserves the soul from the corruption of sin, making of man, as it were, a living victim, holy and acceptable to almighty God.[1]

Let us go, therefore, to Bethlehem; let us offer with the Wise Men gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Where are you to find divine charity if not in the hearts of priests? How will the faithful pray with fervor, if the priests are not faithful to the duty of prayer, and how will the people offer themselves a sacrifice to God, if the priests who offer at the altar the body of Christ do not first immolate themselves? O my God, grant me the very thing You would like to receive from me—an humble and contrite heart at the sight of my past transgressions, a heart burning with divine charity and filled with gratitude for the numberless graces bestowed upon me, and for which I ought to spend my life in continued thanksgiving.

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[1] Obsecro . . ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam, Deo placentem. (Rom. xii. 1.)

Third Point.—What they receive in return for their gifts. St. Bonaventure has represented to us the Wise Men on their knees before the poor manger where the Son of God was born. He says: "Their souls were filled with sweet consolation." After adoring the Son, they converse with the Mother; they tell her of the occasion of their journey, the many incidents connected with it; and the virgin Mother speaks to them of the mystery of her Son. The child Jesus, with a loving smile, shows plainly how pleased He is with their coming. On the other hand, they gaze on Him with unutterable joy, not only with the eyes of faith, but with bodily eyes also, for Jesus was the fairest among the children of men.[1] In return for the gold they have offered, says a pious writer, they receive the gift of true wisdom, which enlightens their minds in regard to the sublime mysteries of religion, and enables them to impart the same to others; for the gift of incense, the spirit of prayer was given them, prayer by which they parted with the world to cling to God only; for the gift of myrrh, God gave them the science of the cross; He taught them the value of the sufferings endured in life for the sake of God.

By the advice of an angel, they went back by another way into their own country: *Responso accepto in somnis ne redirent ad Herodem, per aliam viam reversi sunt in regionem suam.* There is no doubt but they spread everywhere the news of what God had done for them. After adoring Jesus, they went away like so many apostles; later on they will be martyrs. How fast one progresses under the influence of the holy love of God. A star directed them to go and look for the Messias; they learned from the Scriptures the place of His birth; God takes care of them on their way back; they were admitted to the most intimate communication with Jesus. To-day they give Him their gold, later on will give their heart's blood.[2] To what perfection a prompt, firm, and persevering correspondence with divine grace leads! Let us congratulate the Wise Men, let us beg of them that we may have their holy dispositions in order to obtain the same favors. In our preparation before, in our thanksgiving after Mass, let us enter into the spirit of the Church, which is so well expressed in the words of the Collect of to-day. The Church wishes us on this solemnity, which, in the East, is called the "feast of celestial light," to ask of God to grant

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[1] Conspice et puerum Jesum; nondum loquitur, sed stat cum maturitate et gravitate, tanquam intelligens, et benigne respicit illos; et illi multum delectantur in eo, tam visu mentali, tanquam intus edocti et illuminati, quam corporali, quia speciosus erat prae filiis hominum. (Med. c. ix.)

[2] An old tradition tells that the Wise Men were kings; after going back to their countries, they left all for the sake of God, and died martyrs.

us that we may fully understand the Incarnation of the Son of God, in which we believe now by faith, but which will be one day made manifest to us in the beatific vision: *Concede propitius, ut qui jam te ex fide cognovimus, usque ad contemplandam speciem tuae celsitudinis perducamur.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—What the Wise Men do at Bethlehem. They stay in Jerusalem just long enough to learn where the Messias is born. No sooner have they learned it than they start. The star appears again; how great their joy! They are at Bethlehem; they are more than surprised when they see the star resting above a wretched stable; it is a trial, but faith is strong in these Wise Men. They enter, they kneel and prostrate themselves before the child Jesus. O my God, show me a little of Thy divine beauty as Thou didst to the Wise Men, and hereafter the world will be dead to me; I will love naught but Thee.

Second Point.—What presents they offer. By their presents they pay homage to His royalty, to His divinity, and even to the death to which He submits Himself in order to save us from eternal death. Christ is to us what He was to the Wise Men; let us also offer Him the same presents. Gold is an emblem of charity, incense of prayer, myrrh of mortification. My God, give me what I know will please Thee, an humble and contrite heart, a heart burning with love of Thee, a grateful heart for the many benefits conferred on me.

Third Point.—What they receive in return. Their souls are filled with the sweetest of consolations. For their gold, God gives them true wisdom; for their incense, the gift of prayer; and for the myrrh, the true knowledge of the cross and a love of suffering. They go back by another way into their own countries, spreading as they go the wonderful things they have witnessed. They had come to adore Jesus, they go away His apostles; later on they will be His martyrs. You see to what heights one may attain by prompt, generous, and continued fidelity to the grace of God.

MEDITATION XIII.

THREE UNHAPPY RESULTS OF HEROD'S RESISTANCE TO DIVINE GRACE.

1.—*He is Troubled.*
2.—*He is Blinded.*
3.—*His Heart is Hardened.*

First Point.—He is troubled. The example of the Wise Men who had come so far to adore the new-born King, the answer given by the priests and doctors to questions regarding the place, the tribe, the city of His birth, and the prophecy quoted on that occasion, all that was more than enough, one would say, to make a salutary impression on Herod. It was grace from above, but he heeded it not; hence we make use of the words of Scripture: "He is troubled": *Turbatus est.* A poor child in the cradle causes him to tremble. Who is that child? Is He a King, is He God? Herod would like to know, but he can not solve the mystery. In his anxiety he is determined to search into the mystery, but the more efforts are made, the greater is his confusion. He nearly catches a glimpse of the reality, but his secret ambition serves to torment him all the more. O God, how terrible Thou art to Thine enemies, even when Thou dealest with them leniently! *Impii quasi mare fervens, quod quiescere non potest! Non est pax impiis, dicit Dominus.* (Is. lvii. 20, 21.) Nothing solid in their minds, no rest in their hearts. The light of faith is troublesome. They see enough to disturb the rest which the wicked, in the darkness of their ways, enjoy; but not enough to dispel the errors of the mind and give peace to the soul; that peace is given only to those who are obedient to the voice of grace.

Had Herod gone with the Wise Men to the manger, and seen there the Child whose birth caused him so much fear, he would have been convinced that His kingdom was not of this world, and that He who came to give crowns of immortality cared naught for earthly scepters. He would at once have felt quite easy. One who resists grace resists God Himself, and God is not slow to punish such a one: *Quis restitit ei et pacem habiut?* (Job, ix. 4.) Like Cain after the murder of his brother, the sinner is seized with fear; peace, true peace, is known only to the obedient. "If we will show ourselves entirely docile to the interior light of grace which

comes from God, we will always be filled with that consolation which is the gift of God to souls that resist Him not." (F. Lallemant.) *Si me audieris et vocem meam secutus fueris, poteris multa pace frui.* (Imit. l. 3, cxxv.) O Priest of God, when your soul is troubled, when a cloud seems to overshadow you, do not remain satisfied with asking your soul the reason of such feeling: *Quare tristis es, anima mea?* You may yourself discover the answer—you have been disobedient to the grace of God. Beg of God, then, to forgive you, and cheerfully hope again for the future: *Spera in Deo.*

Second Point.—He is blinded. He refused the light because it interfered with his ambition; the light is withdrawn and wisdom departs at one and the same time. Herod is no longer that shrewd diplomat whom cunning had raised to the supreme dignity; he is now but a fanatic, unable to control either his fury or his despair. How strange his conduct! If he really believes that the Child mentioned is the Messias expected for so many centuries and foretold by so many prophets, what madness to think that he will destroy in His cradle Him who is sent by Almighty God to redeem the whole world! If, on the other hand, he believed it not, why his enormous and unprofitable crime, which has caused his name to be branded with infamy? He has lost every vestige of common sense. He knows that the strangers have come to him on this all-important business, yet he sends them away without as much as an escort.

No wonder his plans fail, no wonder his own schemes work against him. He is caught in the trap which he set to ensnare the Wise Men. He wanted to deceive them, they deceive him. His ambition was to obliterate the very name of the new-born King—behold he makes it known the world over. He wished to hush the event of His birth into perpetual silence, and by his own doing it will be known to the end of time. Oh, the horror, the tumult, the wailing, when innocent babes were torn from the arms of their mothers and slaughtered under their very eyes! Has there ever been a nation or a people who has not heard of the cruelty of Herod, one who has not wondered at the power displayed by Almighty God in this circumstance? And thus, my God, dost Thou bring to confusion the prudence of worldlings who try to work against Thee: *Perdam sapientiam sapientium, et prudentiam prudentium reprobabo.* (1 Cor. i. 19.) True wisdom, true prudence, consists in fearing God and shunning evil. *Ecce timor Domini ipsa est sapientia, et recedere a malo intelligentia.* (Job, xxviii. 28.)

Third Point.—His heart is hardened. By following the celestial light, the Wise Men acquired virtue after virtue; they came

to the intimate knowledge and finally to the ever-blessed possession of God. Herod, in heeding not the same light, commits crime after crime; from one abyss he falls into another, until he reaches the last of all by final impenitence. The demon of jealousy leads him on to measures of excessive cruelty. He is told that the one he pursues is the Messias, the promised Redeemer of Israel. The world must go without a Redeemer if He be Herod's rival. He has recourse to cunning and deceit in order to find Him. He says he wishes to adore Him; in his heart he means to kill Him. No sooner has he found out that the Wise Men have deceived him: *Videns quoniam illusus esset a Magis*, than he throws off the mask of hypocrisy, the last vestige of humanity, and indulges his mad fury: *Iratus est valde.* He orders the slaughter of all the little ones; he does not spare his own. A whole country is reeking with blood, so is his own palace. Nothing matters provided he does not lose his scepter. A cruel disappointment awaits him—the King whom he wishes to destroy is the only one saved. Herod himself, before the year is over, dies by the hand of God in the wildest despair.[1] *In peccato vestro moriemini.* (John, viii. 21.) Thus spoke the Lord for those people who shut their eyes against manifest truths, and to such an end do those come who abuse the grace of God. But what is the cause of one's abusing the grace of God? An evil inclination which at the beginning is not corrected with firmness and perseverance. How important, then, it is to practise interior mortification. Give way to your passions, and all is lost. No consideration whatever, neither of God nor of man, neither the multiplicity nor the enormity of sin, not even the terrible punishment which is in store for him, will deter such a man from his evil way. Let us, therefore, wage war against ourselves. The fight may be hard, but when it is over we shall have peace. Let us not be afraid. After all it must be short—only a few days of struggle, and then eternal rest. Let us apply to God for help, and let us say with the Church in her prayers on the feast of the Holy Innocents: *Omnia in nobis vitiorum mala-mortifica; ut fidem tuam, quam lingua nostra loquitur, etiam moribus vita fateatur.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—He is troubled. All that had taken place must have made some good impression on Herod, but he does not heed

[1] Febri, tussi, dysenteria, podagra, morbo pediculari, putredine verendorum, asthmate et foetore intolerabili percussus, animam truculentam exhalavit adeo ut ipse seipsum occidere conatus fuerit.

the call of grace, and, therefore, he is troubled. This is the first punishment of his resistance. The wicked are like the sea, never at rest. Peace is the portion of the children of God. He rewards their obedience with peace. O my soul, when thou art sad thou must know it is the result of disobedience.

Second Point.—He is blinded. He heeded not the light; the light is withdrawn and wisdom departs from him. We see now but a raving madman. He seems to have lost even common sense; everything works against him; his conduct will only make more manifest to the whole world his own cruelty and the power of Almighty God. Thus, my God, dost Thou bring to confusion those who rebel against Thee.

Third Point.—His heart is hardened. By following the celestial light the Wise Men went from virtue to virtue; by not heeding it Herod went from crime to crime. How vain all his criminal attempts. The One for whose death he thirsts is the only one spared. Herod himself soon afterward dies in a fit of wild despair. How important it is to immediately control our wicked inclinations!

Second Sunday after Epiphany.

MEDITATION XIV.

THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS.

1.—*Excellence of that Name.*
2.—*Its Wonderful Power.*
3.—*The Honor it Deserves.*

First Point.—Excellence of that name. The excellence of the holy name of Jesus is pointed out to us by the Apostle St. Paul, who, writing to the Philippians, said: "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth." (Philip. ii.)

In these words of the Apostle we find the origin, the reason, and the excellence of the name of Jesus. The origin: that name comes

from heaven; angels revealed it to Mary first, then to Joseph[1] It was the Father who gave that name to His Son: *Donavit illi nomen;* for, as the Scriptures say, the "Son no one knoweth but the Father."[2] Hence He alone was able to give Him a truly appropriate name. No one ever pronounced that holy name before it was first uttered by the lips of the Almighty God: *Quod os Domini nominabit.* (Is. lxiii. 2.) He wished, St. Paul tells us, to exalt His Son in the same proportion that He had humbled Himself in the mysteries of His Incarnation and of His sorrowful Passion. *Propter quod et Deus exaltavit illum.* By His humiliation the Son immensely glorified His Father, and in order to recompense Him, the Father gave Him the name Jesus. You may imagine now what are the privileges attached to that holy name.

That name is above all other names, because all that is great and precious and glorious is implied in it. 1. The wisdom, sanctity, goodness, power, mercy, and charity of God, by which we are to be saved. 2. All the graces and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, by which souls are sanctified, and which come from the fulness of Christ as from their mainspring. 3. All the different offices, such as master, physician, father, shepherd, pontiff, all of which the same Christ took upon Himself in His quality of Redeemer.

The name of Jesus is above all other names on account of the privileges attached to it. When calling His Son Jesus and appointing Him Redeemer of the world, His mission was to satisfy God's offended majesty. Henceforth man's salvation is to be His work; men's fate is in His hands; He will open or close the gates of heaven at His will. Jesus means a king, on whom all other potentates depend, a judge before whose tribunal all must appear, from whose sentence there shall be no appeal.

Finally, the name of Jesus is above all other names because it implies all the greatest privileges granted by God to His creatures; God becoming man, and man admitted to communication with God by divine grace, and destined to eternal glory hereafter.

When the prophet Isaias was announcing Him who was to be born, he called Him "the wonderful, the counselor, the God of strength, the father of the world to come, the prince of peace," .... thus expressing beforehand, says St. Bernard, all the greatness implied in the name of Jesus.

He is called "wonderful" because in one person He joined the divine and human natures. He is called "counselor of the Al-

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[1] Paries Filium et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum. (Luke, i. 31.) Pariet Filium et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum: ipse enim salvum faciet populum suum a peccatis eorum. (Matt. i. 21.)

[2] Nemo novit Filium nisi Pater. (Matt. xi. 27.)

mighty" because in His quality of Jesus, He is admitted in the council of the Holy Trinity, there to plead the cause of the elect. He is called "the God of strength" because to save us He conquered death, crushed the power of Satan, and destroyed sin. Jesus is "the father of the world to come" because, by His death, He became the father of all the elect. He is "the prince of peace" because, by His blood, He reconciled heaven and earth. All these glorious titles given to Him by the Scriptures are so many rays springing from that glorious name of Jesus.

Second Point.—Wonderful power of the name of Jesus. Listen to what St. Bernard wrote on this very point: "The name of Jesus," he says, "is light, is food, is remedy . . . light to him who announces it, food to him who meditates upon it, a sweet and all-healing balm to him who invokes it. . . How was the Christian faith spread so rapidly over the world? By the preaching of that holy name; with the holy name as a beacon, the world emerged from the darkness of infidelity to embrace the light of faith. It is not only light, it is food also. Do you not feel stronger whenever you reflect on all that name implies? Is there in the world a better food for the heart or mind? Is there anything like it to restore power to our senses, to strengthen virtue and give true vigor to pious and chaste affection? The name of Jesus is honey to the mouth, music to the ear, and joy to the heart. That holy name is the great remedy against dejection and the other evils that affect the soul. Are you downhearted? Let the name of Jesus be in your heart, let it be on your lips; scarcely have you breathed it, when the cloud vanishes and peace is restored. Have you been guilty of grievous offence? Are you on the verge of despair; call on the name of Jesus and hope revives. By it all temptation is overcome, every passion is subdued. O my soul, thou hast a universal remedy in that holy name of Jesus, that name so sweet and so powerful."

Third Point.—What shall we do to honor that holy name? Realize its true meaning, and then give vent to the feelings of your heart. Gratitude first: it was for your salvation that the Son of God took the name of Jesus. That name recalls to your mind the labors, the humiliations and the sufferings He endured for you. It recalls to your minds all the mysteries of His life and death, and the divine graces that came to us through His mediation. Confidence comes next. In Jesus we find the most tender of parents. the most faithful of friends, the most powerful of protectors. His name is a terror to the demon himself; when it is pronounced he must take to flight: *In nomine meo daemonia ejicient.* At last comes love: It would be of very little use to pronounce that name

with our lips, if the heart, the mind, the soul, did not join to do it homage. St. Paul had it always on his lips and under his pen, and the way in which he has spoken of it shows plainly what a love he bore the sweet name of Jesus.

We must, besides, try to acquire the virtues suggested to us by that holy name. "When I say Jesus," says St. Bernard, "I mean not only a man meek and humble of heart, a good, sober, chaste, single-hearted man, in whom purity and sanctity reign supreme, but I mean also a God all-powerful, who assists me by His own strength to become what He wishes me to be. As man, I must imitate Him; as God, I rely exclusively on Him."

Finally, the great Apostle suggests another most excellent way to honor the holy name of Jesus: "Whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." (Colos. iii. 17.) Let us do all for the glory of the Redeemer, as He did all for our salvation. Let us thank the Father through His Son, since He gave us all through Him. After the example of holy Church, let us show reverence to that great name whenever we pronounce it or hear it pronounced, and let us make our own the words which are read at the end of the Mass of to-day: "Almighty, eternal God, who hast created and redeemed us, favorably regard our petitions and vouchsafe to accept with a clement and benign countenance the sacrifice of the saving Victim, which we have offered to Thy majesty in honor of the name of Thy Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, that Thy grace being infused into us, under the glorious name of Jesus, by the title of eternal predestination, we may rejoice that our names are written in heaven, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—How excellent the name of Jesus. That name came from heaven. God alone could give that name to His Son, because no one knows the Son except the Father. In giving Him that name, He wished to exalt His Son in the same proportion as the Son had humbled Himself during His mortal life. That name is above every other name, because it supposes all perfections in the one to whom it is given; because, also, immense privileges are attached to it. In receiving it, Jesus was appointed the arbiter between God and man, and the restorer of divine glory. Isaias foretold the grandeur of that name when he said that the Messias would be called "the wonderful, the counselor, the strong God, the father of the world to come, the prince of peace."

Second Point.—Wonderful effects of that name. It is light to him who hears it preached, it is food to him who thinks on it, it is healing to him who invokes it. It was owing to the preaching of the holy name that the light of faith spread with such rapidity throughout the world. Can there be a better food for the mind or for the heart? Is there to be found any safer remedy against despondency and the other evils that afflict the souls of men?

Third Point.—What to do to honor the holy name. First, study well the meaning of that holy name, and try to acquire the different virtues it suggests—gratitude, confidence, love. Try to practise the virtues which shine so conspicuously in Jesus. "Whatever you do, do it through Our Lord Jesus Christ, returning thanks through Him to the Father." Show some mark of reverence when you pronounce or hear the name of Jesus pronounced by others.

Purification of Mary.

MEDITATION XV.

PRESENTATION OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE. CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Consider the Parties to these Mysteries.*
2.—*Listen to What they Say.*
3.—*Consider What they Do.*

First Prelude.—"And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord . . . and behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon; and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was in him . . . and he came by the Spirit into the temple, and when His parents brought Him according to the custom of the law, he also took Him into his arms, and blessed God and said: Now thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace . . . and there was a prophetess, called Anna. . . . Now she, at the same hour, coming in, gave praise to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all who looked for the redemption of Israel." (Luke, ii.)

Second Prelude.—Ask of God that you may derive much good from this meditation. May He grant you the spirit of sacrifice, of humility, obedience, and fervor in His service.

First Point.—Consider the parties to these mysteries. In heaven the Blessed Trinity, after long expectation, receives the noblest offering that ever was made by man to God. Angels gaze in rapture on the sight. At Bethlehem, at Jerusalem, on the way, passers-by take no notice of a poor family, by far the noblest that was ever seen on earth. But what matters the notice of the world? Jesus in the arms now of Mary, now of Joseph, and finally of the holy old man Simeon. And now on the altar. With a look which combines the charm of infancy with the sense of mature age, He gazes on His Mother and those who surround her.[1] Mary is surrounded by other women, there is nothing to distinguish her but her more than angelic modesty. Shortly afterward see her on her knees before the altar, offering to God the treasure He has bestowed upon her. Read on her countenance what is going on within her. O blessed Mary, what a One thou holdest in thy arms, the Saviour of the world, the ransom of all mankind! But ah, poor Mother, she already feels the immense sufferings, the ignominious death of that Infant who is far more precious to her than life. Simeon is overwhelmed with joy; his happiness is such that he seems to have shaken off old age. Anna is filled with love; how she longs to make known to the world the infant Redeemer! What an abundant subject of meditation is here to be found for a pious soul.

Second Point.—Consider what they say. Mary and Joseph converse with each other on the way between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. What is the subject of their conversation? They converse interiorly with Jesus, the innocent Victim they are about to lay on the altar. What did Mary say when she offered to God the true Lamb of God? What a beautiful lesson here for the priest about to go to the altar! Receive, eternal Father, Thy Son, who is also mine; through obedience for the law I offer him, because He is the first-born of His mother. In Him and through Him, be Thou praised forever. He is my thanksgiving and that of the whole world. Through His infinite merits show mercy to men, show mercy especially to poor sinners. Receive at the same time the sacrifice of the mother and that of Thy Son; Thou, O God, the beginning and the end, and Lord of all; to Thee be praise forever, let the world bow and acknowledge Thy dominion.[2] Consider next the canticle of Simeon: *Nunc dimittis.* Thou dost now dismiss Thy servant in peace; let my eyes be now closed; they have seen enough since they have beheld the light and salvation of

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[1] Cum maturitate et gravitate, tanquam intelligens, benigne respicit illos (St. Bonav. Med. c. ix.)

[2] St. Bonav., Ibid.

mankind. When one has tasted the sweet presence of Jesus, what more can he wish for on earth? Listen to what the same prophet says concerning the Son and the Mother. "O peerless Mother, what sorrows are in store for thee. I see the sword that is to pierce thy heart; that Son, that darling child, will be the cause of all thy sorrows. True enough He is come to this world to redeem it, and yet many will be eternally unhappy for not having heeded Him." The holy widow speaks, also under the inspiration from above; she answers that the prophesies are at an end, the Messias is come; she proclaims the greatness of the Child to all who expected the consolation of Israel.

Third Point.—Consider what they do. Mary and Joseph leave their home, the humble spot where they had spent so many sweet hours. True, they were destitute in the eyes of the world, but what, O God, can be wanting to him who possesses Thee, and is aware of it? They start. Go with them. See the Son in the arms of His Mother: He is the light with which the woman of the Gospel goes about looking for the lost groat, that is, the doomed world. He is the treasure which is to be paid for the ransom of the universe. Now they are at Jerusalem—they go toward the Temple. Joseph carries the humble offering the mother must present to the priest—the pair of turtle doves that the law requires of the poor. He has also with him the five shekels to redeem the first-born. As they ascend the steps, behold the just man Simeon, inspired by the Holy Ghost and prompted by the desire of His soul, moves slowly toward the house of God, to see the Lord's anointed, according to the promise that had been made to him. No sooner has he seen Him, than, by divine revelation, he knows the whole mystery. He falls on his knees and adores the Son in Mary's arms. Mary also knows all. She presents her Son to the prophet, who takes Him up with reverence, then rising from where he kneels, blesses God, saying: *Nunc dimittis.* He tells of the contradictions of the Son, the martyrdom of the mother. Next comes Anna, even more remarkable by her virtue than by her age. This old couple, a figure of the Old Law, unite together in praise of the Child, who comes to renew the face of the earth and save mankind. Simeon gives the Child back to Mary, who offers Him to God. The mysterious birds are also offered, the money is paid—all that the law prescribed is now complied with. After some time spent in adoration in the temple, which had so many sweet recollections for Mary, she, the Virgin Mother, in company with Joseph, goes out, pressing to her bosom the youthful Victim who is to grow up henceforth under her eyes, till the great day of His immolation.

Converse now a while with Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Simeon. Beg of Mary to make up by her fervor for the coldness of your disposition, when you perform at the altar an act far more solemn than the one performed by her in the Temple of Jerusalem. Ask, through her intercession, for a spirit of purity, zeal, sacrifice, and obedience. This will be the fruit of your meditation.

Resolution.—Renew now and then the consecration made of yourself to the glory of God, and in your daily conduct bring home to yourself the words of the Apostle: *Ecce venio . . . ut faciam, Deus, voluntatem tuam.* (Heb. x. 7.) *Suscipe, Domine,* etc.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Consider the parties to these mysteries. In heaven the Holy Trinity receives the noblest offering that ever was made by man to God. In Bethlehem, at Jerusalem, the grandest family that was ever on earth passes unnoticed. Jesus in the arms of Mary—of Joseph and of Simeon—on the altar. Mary not distinguished from other women, there on her knees offering to Almighty God her divine Son. Yet happy, O poor Mother! Simeon in rapture, beside himself with the intensity of love.

Second Point.—Consider what they say. Mary and Joseph converse with each other on the way; what Mary says when offering the true Lamb of God; Simeon's canticle; he foretells the glory of the Son, the martyrdom of the Mother; the holy widow speaks.

Third Point.—Consider what they do. Mary and Joseph leave their poor yet happy home. Jesus was there with them. They are now at Jerusalem; they go up to the Temple; Simeon, overwhelmed with joy, adores the Infant in the arms of the Mother, takes it in his own; the price for redeeming the child is paid, all that the law requires is now fulfilled. Renew now and then your consecration to God and bring home to yourself in your daily actions the words of St. Paul: *Ecce venio,* etc.; "Behold I come, O Lord, that I may do Thy will."

MEDITATION XVI.

EXAMPLE OF MARY'S OBEDIENCE.

1.—*Obedience Exalted in this Mystery, and all Reasons for not Practising it Victoriously Refuted.*

2.—*How Mary Complied with the Law of Purification.*

3.—*How Jesus was First Presented, then Redeemed, by Mary.*

First Point.—All arguments in favor of disobedience answered by the examples given to us in this mystery. Here we see a double law complied with.

The first law concerned the first-born. He was to be offered to the Lord in order to show God's dominion over men, and also in remembrance of the death among the Egyptian children, while all the children of Israel were saved. Surely that law did not concern Jesus, who, being God, had, like His Father, supreme dominion over all things. As to the slaughter of the Egyptian children, He Himself it was who was pleased to show in this manner His justice and His mercy. He had no need of being reminded of it. Besides, how is He to be held up as the Redeemer of the people if He Himself must be redeemed? In our own opinion, dispensation in this case was not only legitimate, but necessary; yet eternal wisdom thought differently.

The second law concerned mothers. These were reputed unclean by the very fact that they had given birth to a child. "They were, as it were, excommunicated," says Bossuet, "on account of their fecundity; it was such a misfortune to be born in those days." For forty or sixty days, according to the sex of the child, the women could not touch anything holy, neither could they go to the Temple. But Mary, the chaste spouse of the Holy Ghost, was far from being an ordinary mother. A virgin at the conception, a virgin she was when she brought forth her Child. Always spotless, she became still more so while carrying in her womb the God of all purity. And yet she submits to the law, considering herself bound to do so for the edification of others. Far from claiming exemption from a law that put her on the same level with others, and which took from her, apparently at least, the glorious privilege of her virginity which she was so anxious to preserve,[1] she shows her-

[1] Luke, i. 34.

self eager to comply with the very letter of that law. After such an example, coming after the one given by Jesus, who will still look for excuses? Oh, when shall we, like Jesus and Mary, find our delight in the glory of God and the edification of our neighbor? How quick we are to look for reasons and excuses![1] If we see God only in him who commands; if we look only for His will, we shall always comply, we shall even find delight in being humble.

Second Point.—How does Mary comply with the law of purification? She complies with the letter as well as the spirit of the law. In spite of her glorious privilege of being the Mother of God, Mary stops in the first court of the Temple, like other women, who entered not the second till after their purification. She humbles herself before the priest, who prays for her as he does for others. For her is offered, as for others, not only the sacrifice of adoration or the holocaust, but even the sacrifice for sin: *Unum in holocaustum et alterum pro peccato: orabitque pro ea sacerdos, et sic mundabitur.* (Lev. xii. 8.) On beholding her on her knees, in the attitude of a penitent among a crowd of sinful women, who would take her to be the Queen of angels, the Queen of virgins? But God knows how pure she is, and that is enough for her; she cares nothing for the opinion of the world. She honors in her person the sanctity of God, in comparison with whose sanctity the perfection of man is less than a shadow. She teaches me to humble myself and to purify my heart when I enter the "dreadful place" to perform any duty or to offer the same Victim which she herself once offered. She teaches me to make little of the opinion of men. I am only what I am before God. Men's opinion neither adds nor takes away anything from me.

O Mary, thy virtues fill me with admiration and confusion. The glory of a mother is to find in her children some resemblance to herself; when will I be somewhat like unto thee? Purity and humility are required by my holy office, and, alas, I lack both. Pride and sensuality so often stain my soul! But I will go to thee and say what the leper said to Jesus: "If thou wilt, thou canst

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[1] Bossuet illustrates this by an example. The director of a priest, seeing that his penitent had lost the spirit of his sacred character, deemed necessary, after mature reflection, to advise him to retire into a solitude for some time. What does the penitent say? "People will think I went to do penance for my sins; my name as a priest will suffer by it." Jesus and Mary did not argue thus. Jesus says not, They will hold Me as a sinner if I submit to the circumcision or presentation. Mary says not, They will look at me as to an ordinary woman if I submit to the law of purification; it would be to lower myself and my Son. (3d elevation, 18th week.)

make me clean." Mother of Jesus, my Mother, I am sure, thou sayest, "I will; be thou made clean."[1]

Third Point.—How Jesus was first presented, then redeemed, by Mary. After her purification, Mary passed from the first court into the second. In front of the altar, says St. Bonaventure,[2] she bends the knees and offers her beloved Son. Jesus offers Himself, as He will do later on, by the hands of His priests. He renews the consecration He had already made of His own person to the Father at the hour of His conception: *Ingrediens mundum;* He gives Himself, body and soul, His natural as well as His mystical body. With His own person, He offers at the same time, as our head, all those who will one day belong to Him. Surely His priests were present in His mind. He offered them to His Father as His coworkers and helpers, and the Father accepted them, saying: *Eritis mihi sancti, quia sanctus sum ego Dominus, et separavi vos . . . ut essetis mei.* (Lev. xx. 26.) Have I always thought in what measure I was the property of God?

Jesus after this was no longer His own master. He belonged neither to Mary nor to the people; He belonged solely to His Father. Mary redeems Him; she does so as much for us as for herself; with what joy she received Him from the priest after paying five shekels for Him as the law required! O, how little is paid for the owner of heaven and earth! Poor Mother, you will not keep Him very long! You will one day see Him sold for thirty pieces of silver and dragged to the place of execution. O firstborn of God, redeemed for me in Thy infancy, sold for me at the end of Thy life, I wish now to redeem myself from the pleasures of this wicked world. I wish to sell myself for Thee and to spend myself in works of charity.[3]

Return thanks to God, for having given you His own Son. If you, by virtue of your state of life, are more the property of God than the laity, God is also more your property by the privilege of your exalted office. Go to the altar with a mind determined to make a better use of all your privileges, the most precious of which is the very altar at which you offer up the Holy Sacrifice. Here you have enough, if you only make good use of it, to pay your own debts and to discharge all the sacred duties of your holy calling. Ask Mary to cleanse your heart and to kindle in it a spark of that fire which consumed her own. Let her present you to God as she once presented to Him her divine Son, Jesus.

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[1] Mark, i. 40.
[2] St. Bonav., Med. vi. 11.
[3] Bossuet. Elevation on this mystery.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Excuses for disobedience, refuted by the examples given us in connection with this mystery. The law of the presentation did not concern Jesus, nor the law of purification Mary. Both were exempt, yet they preferred to be obedient. After this double example, what think you of our excuses? After the examples of Jesus and Mary, let us rejoice in procuring God's glory and the edification of our neighbor.

Second Point.—How Mary complies with the law of purification. In spite of her incomprehensible dignity, she stops in the first court of the Temple as being unworthy to pass into the second. She humbles herself before the priest, who prays for her as for other women. Oh, how she teaches me to humble myself and to cleanse my heart before entering the Holy of holies, and also the little esteem I should make of the opinion of men. I am only what I am in the sight of God.

Third Point.—How Jesus is first presented, next redeemed. Jesus offers Himself by the hands of Mary as He will later on offer Himself by the hands of His priests. In offering Himself as our head, He offered also His mystical body. I was present to His mind. Mary redeems Jesus both for us and for herself. O Mary! cleanse my heart, give me a spark of that fire which consumed thine own, and then present me to God as thou didst once present thine own child, Jesus.

MEDITATION XVII.

THE SAINTLY OLD SIMEON.

1.—*He is Prepared for the Grace which He Receives.*
2.—*What is that Grace?*
3.—*What Profit does He draw from It?*

First Point.—Simeon is prepared for the grace which comes to him in the Temple. The Gospel tells us "he was just and fearing God . . . and expecting the consolation of Israel." He believed in the promises concerning the Redeemer, and, living by faith, he lived in justice. One thing alone he feared, to displease God; he had but one desire, to see the promised Messias, the consolation and the salvation of Israel. Ages rolled on. So many patriarchs and prophets, who had lived in hope like himself, had died without

seeing their hope realized; still he was hopeful, he was waiting, *Exspecians!* what was he waiting for? *Consolationem Israel.* The spirit within him detached his heart from all things of this world. All his affections were for the coming Messias.

O my soul, be thou guided by the spirit of truth, and thou shalt cease to search for mere shadows. All thy desires and longings will be for Jesus alone. If consolation does not come, wait with patience. Thou hast waited? Wait still longer. *Exspecta, exspecta.* (Is. xviii. 20.) Say with the Royal Prophet: *Exspectans, exspectavi Dominum.* (Ps. xxxix. 2.) It may be only when life is near the end that I will be allowed to gaze one moment like Simeon on my Lord Jesus Christ, with a glance that has in it an age of happiness. Such graces come but once, and God, as a rule, makes us wait a long time for them, but when they come, immense is the joy, lasting the effect. They last a short time, but something remains which is, as it were, a continuation and a renewal of the same. Such was the remote preparation as far as Simeon was concerned; behold now the actual or proximate preparation. *Et venit in spiritu in templum.* Something within him bids him go immediately to the Temple. He knows not, at least distinctly, what awaits him there, but he knows the call he receives is from God. Let us go also to the Temple, *in spiritu*, if we wish to find Jesus. Let us never go there through custom or mere routine: "True worshipers are those who worship in spirit and in truth." Am I prompted by faith when present at religious exercises, when saying my office, when attending to my duties, when offering the dread sacrifice? If I always followed the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, what delights I would experience in my conversations with God, especially at the sacred banquet of the Eucharist!

Second Point.—What grace does he receive in the Temple? He meets the Messias,[1] he sees Him, he acknowledges Him, he even takes Him into his arms. The same spirit which inspired Jesus, Mary, and Joseph to go to the Temple, prompts him to go too. He was looking for the Redeemer, but the Redeemer had been the first to look for old Simeon; Jesus was as eager to give Himself to Simeon as the venerable old man was to receive Him. O happy meeting of a soul with her God, when they both see, acknowledge, and embrace each other. Many there were who saw Jesus during the thirty-three years He spent on earth, but only those knew

[1] This feast the Greeks call "the feast of the meeting." The human race, represented by Simeon after waiting so many hundreds of years, goes to meet the Saviour. He is found in the Temple; there He is who is the source of mercy and mercy itself: Suscepimus, Deus misericordiam tuam in medio templi tui. (Introit of the Mass.)

Him to whom the Holy Ghost revealed Him; Simeon was one of these. O my God, grant the same favor to Thy priests! *Et ipse accepit eum in ulnas suas.* This was more than had been promised him: *Responsum acceperat . . . non visurum se mortem, nisi prius videret Christum Domini.* He had the promise that he would see Him. How different is the heart of God from that of man; God gives always more than He has promised, man gives far less than he promises. Simeon takes the child Jesus in his arms: *Inter brachia sua amplexans, et ad sinum pectusque suum ardentissime et suavissime applicans.* (Corn. a Lap.) What is the reason of his confidence? His humility, his purity, his love—for all this is implied in these words: *Justus, timoratus, exspectans consolationem Israel.* What is going on in his soul at this moment? No doubt the fire of divine love devoured him, at least when he held that treasure after which he had sighed and longed for so many years. Oh, with the spouse in the Scripture well might he say: *Inveni quem diligit anima mea, tenui eum, nec dimittam.* But we have already heard him giving vent to his joy. And, you, Priest of Almighty God, compare the happiness of the old man Simeon with the favor granted to you every day. Under the appearances of bread and wine do you not acknowledge the same Almighty God whom, when a little infant, Simeon held in his arms? Are your hands less honored than his, your ministry less glorious? O more favored than Simeon, you not only receive Him in your arms, but he enters into your very heart.

Third Point.—What fruit does Simeon draw from the favor granted to him? Detachment from the goods of this world, a desire for heaven, and a burning zeal for the salvation of others, to whom he will make known the love of Jesus. His only desire had been to live long enough to see the Lord's anointed, that he might give testimony of Him; now that his prayer has been heard, there is nothing more to live for. When one has seen and tasted God, with that heavenly light which fills the soul with ineffable joy and gives the assurance that all sins are forgiven and with the prospect of an eternity of happiness—one must be patient to live since death is such a gain! Faithful Priest, to you death would be a greater favor than even to the saintly Simeon. When he died he went to Limbo; you would go to heaven. When, by a fervent communion, we have received Our Lord Jesus Christ, can it be hard for us to part with created things? When one has found the source, what cares he for the stream?

It is written of Simeon, that, overwhelmed with joy, and holding Jesus in his arms, he blessed Him: *Et benedixit eum.* "The blessing which we give to God," says Bossuet, "comes from the very

blessing God gives to us." God blesses us by pouring His favors upon us, and we bless God when, convinced that all we receive comes from Him and that we have nothing to give in return, we yet praise Him for His infinite perfections, which are the cause of our joy. The Spirit that reveals to the holy old man Simeon the hidden prerogatives of the adorable Babe fills him at the same time with the desire to make Him known, and he announces his grandeur in that hymn which shall be repeated to the end of time: *Nunc dimittis.* He praises Him as the light of nations, the glory of Israel, the salvation of mankind.

The language of Simeon had surely nothing in it that was new to Mary and Joseph, yet the Evangelist tells us that both were in admiration at what he said. How loving is their admiration! What an excellent way to honor the mysteries connected with the Saviour! The first effect of love is to create affection for the one loved. In utter abasement to consider the wonderful charity of Christ, to lose one's self in admiration and gratitude, neither interiorly nor outwardly, this indeed is the perfection of praise: *Tibi silentium laus.* O God, Light of light, may the light of faith shine brilliantly in my soul. Glory of Israel, glory of God, glory and beauty of the universe, O sweet Jesus, Thou art also my only glory. I am something only when I draw near Thee; in Thee alone, and in Thy cross, which tells me of my own worth, will I glory. In my infirmities will I also rejoice, because they humble me and render me less unworthy of Thy love. O salvation of all the world, be my salvation, and grant that I may zealously work for the salvation of my fellow men.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Simeon is ready for the grace that comes to him in the Temple. He was just and fearing God, expecting the consolation of Israel. The Holy Spirit, who was within him, had detached his heart from created things; he longed only for the Messias. O my soul, be thou directed by the same Spirit, and thou shalt experience the same eagerness in thy search for Jesus. This was the remote preparation, behold the proximate one. He comes to the Temple, prompted by the inspiration of God. Let us go to the temple to pray, not by way of routine, but with a true spirit of faith.

Second Point.—What grace does he receive in the Temple? He meets there the Messias, he acknowledges Him, he takes Him in his arms. Oh, the happy meeting of a soul with her God, when, after a long search, they at last embrace. How many saw Jesus

Christ and knew Him not! But Simeon received even more than he had expected; God always gives us more than we ask of Him. Simeon took the Child in his arms. What made him so confident—was it not his purity, his humility, and his ardent love? What was going on in his soul at that blessed moment? The same God whom Simeon pressed to his heart, I have the good fortune of receiving every day into mine.

Third Point.—What fruit did Simeon draw from the grace granted to him in the Temple? A complete detachment from all created things, a desire for heaven, a burning zeal for God. All that bound him to life was the desire to see the Messias; now that his prayer is heard, earth has nothing more that will attach him to it. For one who loves God to live is a trial. How sweet it must be to die after a fervent communion! The Holy Spirit, who has revealed to the saintly old man the grandeur of Jesus, fills Him now with the desire to make Him known to others. He praises Him as the glory of Israel, as the salvation of mankind. O Jesus, be my salvation, and grant that I may zealously work for that of my fellow-men.

MEDITATION XVIII.

SIMEON PROPHESIES CONCERNING JESUS AND MARY.

1.—*Jesus shall be the Ruin and the Salvation of Many.*

2.—*He shall Meet with Contradiction.*

3.—*Mary's Heart will be Pierced with a Sword of Sorrow.*

Preludes as in Meditation XV.

First Point.—Ecce positus est hic in ruinam. When the saintly old man had given vent to his own devotion in praising and publishing the glories of the Child he held near to his heart, he returned Him to His parents. These were surely transported with joy at what they had heard; but the purest of joys in this world are of very short duration. How the last words of the prophet must have broken their hearts! It was to Mary, to her motherly heart, that he spoke and said: *Dixit ad Mariam matrem ejus.* "That Son of yours, whom you love so fondly, that God made man to redeem mankind, alas, He will not save all; many shall be scandalized in Him, He will be the occasion of ruin for many!" How is the Saviour of human souls to be the occasion of ruin for many, *multorum?* Sad consequence of the perversity of man! It had been predicted: *Erit Dominus in laqueum et in ruinam*

habitantibus Jerusalem; et offendent ex eis plurimi, et cadent, et conterentur. (Isaias, viii. 14, 15.) In the days of St. Paul, these words of the prophet had already their accomplishment, even in our own days: *Offenderunt in lapidem offensionis, sicut scriptum est: Ecce pono in Sion lapidem offensionis et petram scandali.* (Rom. ix. 32, 33.) The Jews never consented to acknowledge the Messias: His own received Him not. By refusing the light and the salvation offered them, they have become more guilty and wretched. It is then true to say that Jesus has been the ruin; but of whom? He was the ruin of a wilfully blind people, of ungrateful and jealous scribes and Pharisees, who persisted in doing evil, because He was good; of people who would not admit His miracles, or found fault with His good deeds, the virtue that came from Him and His followers. The infinite mercy of God condemns those whom it does not justify.

O sweet Jesus, to how many Christians, to how many priests, art Thou not even now an occasion of ruin! Thou art expecting, Thou art urging them to come to Thee. Alas! because Thou art so good, they are so sinful. They render void all Thou hast done for their own happiness. They trample underfoot Thy precious blood, and in spite of Thee Thou must keep away from them and doom them to eternal torments, after purchasing for them eternal joys. *Omnis qui ceciderit super illum lapidem, conquassabitur; super quem autem ceciderit, comminuet illum.* (Luke, xx. 18.)

Second Point.—Et in signum cui contradicetur. These words explain the preceding sentence: Why does not the Redeemer save all those to whom salvation is offered? Why does He not raise all the just on earth to a sublime perfection and to eternal glory in heaven? Because He is contradicted: He was contradicted during all His life, in every way and by all kinds of people, and it is so even in our days. His miracles, His teaching, His benignity, His meekness, all in Him met, and meets even now with contradiction and opposition. What cruel mockery He experienced on Calvary at the hands of sinners! These at least did not know Him: *Si enim cognovissent, nunquam Dominum gloriae crucifixissent.* (1 Cor. ii. 18.) He was able to say to His Father: "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." But how painful it must be for Him to be contradicted even by those He has enlightened, and to whom He has given charge of others. To be fond of praise, to despise humiliation, to look for comfort and ease, to refuse the cross and not to deny one's self—all this is to contradict Jesus Christ, to wage war against Him. Do I not often do all that? My words were for God, my conduct and life opposed to Him; I have been a contradiction to the teaching and example of Jesus

Christ. "The Jews," says Bossuet, "who insulted Him so sacrilegiously on the cross, when He extended His hands to them, were simply contradicting Him." Alas, if He could now, glorious and immortal as He is, experience sorrow, that sorrow would come to Him more from His priests than from all others. For behold now the greatest of contradictions; we, that have been chosen as the instruments of His mercy unto men, we are ourselves an obstacle in the way of that mercy: *Qui alium doces, teipsum non doces; qui praedicas non furandum furaris . . ; nomen Dei per vos blasphematur inter gentes.* (Rom. ii. 21, 24.) How can people believe that the doctrine comes from God, when they see that those who preach it care so little to practise it? I see now, O Jesus, I am Thy adversary, for I am always contradicting Thee; and if I am not with Thee now, what will I find, when I am at the end of my journey, except a terrible judgment and eternal reprobation?[1] O my God, I beseech Thee cleanse my heart of that spirit of contradiction, which makes me so often oppose Thy holy will.

Third Point.—Et tuam ipsius animam pertransibit gladius. To see her beloved Jesus contradicted was surely a torment for the heart of Mary. Her martyrdom was already commenced. Before Simeon had spoken to her, she knew that in becoming the Mother of Christ, she was to undergo great tribulations; but on this day she felt the sword pierce her heart. When presenting Jesus as our victim, she, as it were, ratified the sentence of His condemnation. In the Garden of Olives Jesus was terrified at the sight of death, though He knew beforehand it was to come, because He then and there had to give His consent and to satisfy the sentence of His eternal Father: *Non mea voluntas, sed tua fiat.* In the same manner, Mary suffered more intensely in the Temple, on account of the sorrows that were to come upon her beloved Jesus, because there she had to give Him up to the justice of God and the cruelty of men. From that day forth she experienced in her soul an agony not unlike the agony of her Son. Her desire for the salvation of man struggled with the unspeakable love she felt for Jesus; and the struggle was most cruel. O blessed Mary, how thou hast wept for us! what mortal agony thou hast experienced for our sake! How dare we invoke thee, after having caused thee so many torments? But, in spite of our sins, thou dost still continue to love us, because we are the beloved of Jesus. Be, therefore, always our protectress and our mother. Grant that we never-

[1] Esto consentiens adversario tuo cito dum es in via cum eo: ne forte tradat te adversarius judici, et judex tradat te ministro, et in carcerem mittaris. Amen, dico tibi, non exies inde, donec reddas novissimum quadrantem. (Matt. v. 25, 26.)

more may afflict Him, but that we may follow Him with thee to the foot of the cross, a glimpse of which thou sawest on the day of the Presentation in the Temple.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Jesus is set for the ruin of many. The Redeemer of mankind is the occasion of the ruin, not of a few, but of many! Oh, sad mystery of the perversity of man! Those whom the infinite mercy of God does not render just, it condemns. O my Jesus, for how many, even now, art Thou a stumbling-block! Because Thou art so good, they are so sinful.

Second Point.—Jesus shall be contradicted. He was contradicted all His life and by all kinds of people, and as it has been, so it is now even in our days. The miracles of Jesus, His teaching, His meekness, everything in Him was contradicted. What horrible contradiction took place on Calvary! There His contradictors knew Him not.

Third Point.—A sword of sorrow will pierce Mary's heart. The martyrdom of the virgin Mother had already begun. She knew how dearly she was to pay for the honor of being the Mother of God. But on this day the revelation made to her adds a new sorrow to the one already experienced. By presenting Jesus in the Temple she gave Him up to the justice of the Father and to the cruelty of men. O holy Mary, how much thou hast wept, how must thou hast suffered for our sakes.

PROPER OF THE SAINTS.

November 30.—St. Andrew.

MEDITATION XIX.

ST. ANDREW'S CROSS.

1.—*His Love for the Cross.*
2.—*The Reason of His Intense Love.*
3.—*Wonderful Effects of this Love in Him.*

First Point.—The love St. Andrew bore the cross. The Saviour was one day walking on the shore of the sea of Galilee, when He saw the two brothers, Peter and Andrew. He bade them come and follow Him: *Venite, post me.* By these words He called

them to carry the cross after Him. Peter lovingly submitted, but Andrew grasped it eagerly.

After a life of hardships and suffering of all kinds, spent among the barbarians of Scythia and Thracia, he thought that he had not yet endured enough for his Master. In fact, he never was satisfied till the day came on which he ended his life on the cross. It was at Patras in Achaia that he encountered the death for which he so much longed. There never was a man, however fond of pleasures you may suppose him, that ever craved for them as St. Andrew craved for tortures. He is worn out, both by labor and old age, yet he runs with joy to the place of execution. When he sees the cross his heart is, as it were, enlarged; he bows to it, he blesses it, he embraces it. *O bona crux*, he exclaims; O lovely cross, thou art to me not an instrument of torture but of joy, and how I have longed for thee! *Diu desiderata.* To behold thee is to love thee: *Sollicite amata;* thee have I sought all the days of my life: *Sine intermissione quaesita;* now that I hold thee in my possession, I wish for nothing more: *Et aliquando cupienti animo praeparata!* In the holy transport of his love, he desires the cross itself to leap for joy, so that both might rejoice together: *Ita ut et tu exultans suscipias me.* What, says St. Bernard, was the love within him able to set in motion the wood of the cross? *Ergone tanta est exultatio, ut exultet et ipsa crux?* (Sermon on the Vigil of St. Andrew.) Behold him on the gibbet, hanging from the cross; for two whole days he spoke from the cross to the multitude, who were in admiration at what he said and at the happiness he seemed to enjoy. From his cross he preaches the cross, and exhorts people to cherish it. One moment, however, a cloud passed over his countenance; he appeared to be sorrowing. They heard him complain, but of what? Ah, they were going to take him down from his beloved cross. The judge, moved by the cries of the multitude, is about to suspend the sentence; but the holy martyr beseeches him not to be so cruelly kind to him, and when the people offer to deliver him, he raises at once his voice to heaven: "O God," he says, "I give myself up to Thee, but grant me a favor: the only one I ask is that I may die on this cross. O Lord, grant that I be never taken from it. I care not for a life which I have already given to Thee:" *Tantum modo in hac voce exaudi me: ne me permittas ab impio judice deponi.* How sublime his courage, how persevering his love for the cross! And such has been at all times, with a more or less intensity, the love good priests have shown before the people for the cross. Have I given the example of such a love? I have, as they, the same high office, but have I loved sufferings?

Second Point.—The reasons of the intense love of St. Andrew. These reasons St. Andrew will tell us himself. He loved the cross for three reasons, all of which filled his soul with transports of joy. It was dear to Jesus Christ, it was a precious treasure to the saint himself, and, finally, the cross led to glory.

I. The apostles, more than once, wondered at the love of the Saviour had for sufferings. He often spoke of them, even on the occasion of His glorious Transfiguration on Mount Thabor, and at such moments His words were uttered with fire and enthusiasm: *Desiderio desideravi hoc Pascha manducare vobiscum.* Why is He so eager to eat the Pasch now more than at any other time? Because His Passion is to come immediately thereafter: *Antequam patiar.* To Him sufferings were as a refreshing bath for which He sighed, because by them the world was to be redeemed: *Baptismo habeo baptizari, et quomodo coarctor usque dum perficiatur!* Speaking of the day of His death, the Holy Ghost called it the day of His espousals, because when dying He was to take the Church for His bride: *In die desponsationis illius, et in die laetitiae cordis ejus.* (Cant. iii. 11.)

St. Andrew loved the cross because he loved Jesus Christ. O cross on which were supported the bleeding limbs of my Redeemer, how glorious thou art in my eyes: *O bona crux, quae decorem et pulchritudinem de membris Domini suscepisti!* Through thee my death will be somewhat like to His. I come to thee, welcome me; I am entitled to the honor I now claim, for I am the disciple of Him who died in thy embrace: *Suscipe discipulum Christi.*

II. The value of the cross was enhanced in the eyes of the apostle by the many treasures that flow from it. It was by the cross that grace came into this world, and when any one is laid upon it, he may expect all spiritual help and strength to conquer all. Precious cross, *crux pretiosa!* In thee is all my hope, with thee nothing is impossible to me; thou woundest in order to heal, thou humblest in order to exalt; to die by thee is to secure eternal life. For this reason I have long cherished thee, I have so long pined after thee: *Amator tuus semper fui et desideravi amplecti te.*

III. Finally, the apostle St. Andrew knows that the end of the cross is glory; it will open to him the gates of heaven. To carry one's cross with patience is the sign of predestination. To be despised, to suffer and die for Christ and after His example, is the surest way to the kingdom of God. O holy cross, by thee I will go to Him who redeemed me through thee: *Per te me recipiat qui per te moriens me redemit.*

When we consider the cross in the same three-fold light, to us the cross ought to be as dear as it was to St. Andrew. Jesus is

as much our model as He was his; we are in need of the same grace, and the cross is its true channel; we expect the same happiness, and the cross is what leads to it. But do we love the cross? Even among priests, among the ministers of the Crucified are there not many of whom it might be said what St. Paul says to the Philippians: *Multi ambulant, quos saepe dicebam vobis, nunc autem et flens dico, inimicos crucis Christi?* (Philip. iii. 18.)

Third Point.—Wonderful effects of this love in him. And first, as for himself, the intensity of his love changed the suffering of his martyrdom into joy. Strange indeed! At the thought of His Passion, Jesus is seized with fear, and beseeches His Father to take away the chalice from His lips, while St. Andrew, when they propose to put an end to his torments, is heard to exclaim: "O Lord," he said, "do not permit such a course: *ne permittas.*" O how condescending is the charity of God. To comfort the weak He takes upon Himself our infirmity; in order to glorify His martyrs He communicates to them His own strength.

How many pure and solid consolations would I have experienced if I had lovingly carried my cross, instead of dragging it unwillingly after me. I must confess such would have been my experience, and it was through my own fault that it has not always been so; one who loves Thee is never alone in his sufferings· *Cum ipso sum in tribulatione.* From the cross come to us all heavenly favors: *In cruce infusio supernae suavitatis.* (Imit.) From the cross flow both the strength of the soul and the joy of the mind: *In cruce robur mentis, in cruce gaudium spiritus.* (Ibid.) There is one thing for which the truly apostolic priest wishes, with more eagerness than for sensible consolations, and that is the salvation of souls. St. Andrew, stretched on the cross, works wonderful conversions. Thousands of infidels abjure error and believe in the Gospel; the very brother of the proconsul bows to Jesus Christ, and from the city of Patras, where he suffered, the light spread rapidly to the neighboring country; and amongst the growing congregations of that time, the church of Achaia shines in a special manner, not only by the number, but by the fervor of its members. Such are the fruits produced in us by the love of the cross. O my God, grant such a love to each of Thy priests; and you, blessed St. Andrew, ask it of God for us. After your example we will walk in the way of true sanctity, we will point out the way to others; and after the light tribulations of this world, which the grace of God will enable us to endure, we will, finally, with a great many of our fellow men, enter into sweet possession of the joys of life everlasting.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The love St. Andrew had for the cross. At Patras the saint was sentenced to the same torture as his divine Master. This had been the object of his ardent desire. At the sight of the cross his heart is, as it were, enlarged. He bows with reverence before the instrument of his torture, he utters blessings upon it, he embraces it; to him the cross is the sum of all happiness. *O bona crux!* For two days from his cross he addresses the multitude who flock around him, lost in admiration. They do not grow tired of listening to him, he appears so happy. Only one thing causes him to complain, his fear is that they will not allow him to complete the sacrifice of his life on the cross. The saints have yearned after sufferings, and I have made it always a point to avoid them.

Second Point.—What are the reasons of his love for the cross? The cross he held to be dear to Our Lord; it was to him a precious treasure, and the end was to be eternal glory. The cross supported the sacred limbs of the dying Saviour; this was enough to enhance its price in the eyes of His disciple. He knows, besides, that the cross contains all he can wish for. Finally, he raised his eyes to heaven, the gates of which the cross was to open to him. Indeed St. Paul was right when he shed tears at the thought that among the disciples there were some who were the enemies of the cross.

Third Point.—Wonderful fruits which St. Andrew's love for sufferings produced in him. That love of his changed his tortures into joy. Upon their going to relieve him, he is heard to mourn and complain, saying: "O Lord, permit it not." How many sad hours would I have spared myself if I had cheerfully taken up my cross instead of dragging it unwillingly after me? The success of the apostle was the reward of his love for sufferings. Why is it that I have no success?

St. Andrew on the Cross.

MEDITATION XX.

THE PRIEST'S MODEL IN THE PULPIT AND AT THE ALTAR.

This meditation, which is substantially taken from the panegyric of St. Andrew by Bourdaloue, should tend to direct priests in the discharge of the two principal obligations of the priesthood, namely,

the preaching of the word of God and the offering up of the divine Sacrifice: *Sacerdotem oportet offerre . . . praedicare.*—(Pontif.)

1.—*St. Andrew on the Cross a Model to the Preacher.*

2.—*St. Andrew on the Cross a Model to the Priest at the Altar.*

First Point.—The cross is the pulpit from which the apostle best exercised the preacher's function. To preach with authority and carry conviction to the hearers, should be the noble aim of him who is appointed to preach. And it was upon the cross that the apostle best discharged the duty of this office.

I. The apostles received, and every priest receives, as a special mission, the mission of preaching God crucified, making known to their fellow men the mystery of the cross, of announcing it as their only hope and the infallible means of salvation: *Nos autem praedicamus Christum crucifixum.* (1 Cor. i. 23.) St. Andrew never preached better than when on his cross; then, indeed, *Crucifixus crucifixum praedicabat.* To carry the cross is an obligation, and a strict one of the evangelical law; but this great truth has not the same efficacy in the mouth of all those who preach it. People like to be told of their duties by one who himself is attached to duty; they are not edified when one who leads a life of ease speaks to them of a penitent and mortified life. St. Andrew spoke of the cross, but he himself was on the cross. This fact gave strength to his words, a strength which carried conviction to his hearers, who were conquered by his example.

II. If a preacher desires to touch the hearts of his hearers, says St. Bernard, his actions must speak louder than his voice, for the voice of action is the only thing that will move men's minds, and subdue their hearts. Show by your conduct that you are fully convinced of what you say, and you will then be able to convince others: *Dabis voci tuae vocem virtutis, si, quod mihi suades, prius tibi videaris persuasisse.* By this means it was that St. Andrew dispelled the errors of the pagans who surrounded him. By his own example he convinced them. There was not among his hearers one who could but say to himself: "If this man was not truly convinced, could he speak, could he act, and could he suffer in that way?" From what people saw and heard, the conclusion was easy that there was something more than human in the man; God alone could thus inspire a man to love sufferings, which the nature of man, left to itself, would not be able to undergo.

III. Who will now be surprised if the preaching of the apostle was a success, a wonderful success? Of the thousands that surrounded the cross of St. Andrew, there was scarcely one who, by the grace of God and the strength of such an example, did not re-

nounce idolatry to profess the law of Jesus Christ; and these thousands of neophytes began immediately to lead lives of the strictest Christian perfection. How can you explain such a sudden and miraculous transformation? It was the effect of the preaching of Christ crucified, by a disciple crucified like his Master. Behold, says St. Jerome, what the Gospel can do, when preached by a man who knows how to suffer and die for his Master. What, then, must preachers do if they wish that the word spoken by them may bring forth fruit? They must carry in their body the mortification of Jesus Christ: *Semper mortificationem Jesu in corpore nostro circumferentes.* (2 Cor. iv. 10.) The life of Christ, if it be manifest in the preacher, must through him be communicated to his hearers: *Ut et vita Jesu manifestetur in corporibus nostris.* (Ibid.) Is it thus, O my God, that I have been mindful of the honor of having been chosen as Thy interpreter and ambassador?

Second Point.—The cross, the altar on which St. Andrew most worthily offered the holy sacrifice. The sacrifice of the altar is to the priest a glorious privilege and the source of all blessings, but in offering the body and blood of Christ he must also offer himself; he must be a victim himself as well as the One immolated for all mankind. On the altar, as well as on the cross, Jesus offers Himself whole and entire to His Father; He offers His mystical body, of which the priests are the chief members, as well as His natural body. Hence the words of St. Paul, who thought himself bound to fill up in his own body the things that were wanting of the sufferings of Christ: *Adimpleo ea quae desunt passionum Christi in carne mea.* (Col. i. 24.) The sacrifice of Christ is completed by our own. To offer up Jesus Christ and to offer himself with Him—behold the part of the true priest!

St. Andrew, in himself, gives us this double example. He never failed to offer the immolated Lamb of God, and at the end of his life he offered himself on the altar of the cross. When the proconsul commanded him to burn incense before idols that he might save his life, the saint gave him this noble answer: *Ego omnipotenti Deo immolo quotidie, non taurorum carnes, sed agnum immaculatum.* But the sacrifice of the altar was not enough for him. After discharging his duty as a priest at the altar, he went as far as to sacrifice himself. This is the perfection of sacrifice. At first he began his sacrifice by becoming a disciple and an apostle of Jesus Christ; he continued it by spending himself generously in the service of his Master, and finally he crowned all by giving up his life for Him on the cross.

Let us follow his example as far as we are able. Let us offer up Jesus Christ, and let us offer ourselves up with Him. Let us

consider it a great misfortune if, through our own fault, we are hindered even once from ascending the holy altar. It is the desire of heaven and earth, and also of the suffering souls in purgatory, that we offer the adorable Sacrifice; for the sake of His own glory God desires it; the angels and saints rejoice, and the Church on earth derives precious benefits therefrom, while we ourselves may hope for every blessing by offering it: *Quando sacerdos celebrat, Deum honorat, angelos laetificat, ecclesiam aedificat, vivos adjuvat, defunctis requiem praestat, et sese omnium bonorum participem efficit.* (Imit. l. iv. ch. v.) But let us not separate what, of necessity, must go together. Our sufferings, our humiliations, our long protracted death (for what else is the hardship of our ministry?), let us unite all these with the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. Let us say to the Master in the words of St. Paul: *Propter te mortificamur tota die; aestimati sumus sicut oves occisionis.* (Rom. viii. 36.)

Yes, my Lord I kiss the cross, since I see that it is through the cross alone that I can worthily discharge the noblest of the duties of my calling. Long enough have I sacrificed Thee alone at the altar; hereafter I will sacrifice myself also. Thou art my Victim, I will be Thine, and since Thou offerest Thyself for me continually, I will also continually offer myself as a victim to Thy glory: *Introibo in domum tuam in holocaustis.—Quid est holocaustum? Totum incensum, sed igne divino. . . . Totum meum consumat ignis tuus; nihil mei remaneat mihi; totum sit tibi.* (St. Aug.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The cross, the pulpit from which St. Andrew preached best. The first duty of the priest and of the apostle as well, is to preach a crucified God, and a priest never preaches better than when he is himself, as it were, crucified: *Crucifixus crucifixum praedicabat.* Let us show by our actions that we ourselves are convinced, and then we will be able to convince others: *Dabis voci tuae vocem virtutis, si quod mihi suades, prius tibi videaris persuasisse.* What, then, must the priest do, who wishes to move his hearers? Carry in his flesh the mortification of Christ: *Semper mortificationem Jesu in corpore nostro circumferentes.*

Second Point.—The cross, the altar on which St. Andrew most fittingly offered the Holy Sacrifice. The Holy Mass if for the priest a glorious privilege and the source of all happiness, if, in offering the divine Victim, he forgets not to offer himself at the same time. Thus it was that St. Paul thought himself bound to fill up in his flesh what was wanting of the sufferings of Christ. To offer the Son of God and at the same time to offer himself, is the part of the

true priest. Such may be said of St. Andrew; can the same be said of me?

December 3—St. Francis Xavier.

MEDITATION XXI.

CHARITY OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER.

Speaking of St. Francis, a certain writer has said: *Totus erat Dei, totus proximi, totus sui.* In these few words, we have the best eulogium that can be made of a priest or a pastor.

1.—*St. Francis all for God; that is, for His Glory.*
2.—*St. Francis all for his Neighbor; that is, for His Sanctification.*
3.—*St. Francis all for Himself; that is, for His Own Perfection.*

First Point.—St. Francis all for God and His glory. *Totus erat Dei.* By these words we mean that he was all for God from the day of his conversion, for he wept bitterly over the years spent in forgetfulness of his God, the years that preceded the day on which this well-known maxim of the Gospel reached his ears: *Quid prodest.* A retreat, which he then made under the direction of St Ignatius, put an end to all his illusions, and no sooner did he learn that all was vanity except God, than he no longer felt but one great desire, to love God and bring others to do the same. O how courageous he was to banish from his heart all that breathed not of the love of God. He went forth begging from door to door, he who had always been so sensitive to worldly honor; see him in hospitals caring for people attacked with loathsome diseases, he who was once so proud and so zealous of public esteem. Again what a sacrifice when he left his native country, to which he never afterward was to return, and, passing near by his home, stopped not even to bid his mother farewell!

One so dead to this world was surely well prepared to love God—and that love consumed him. His countenance was often seen to be as red as fire, tears ran from his eyes, and he breathed burning words, which were as so many sparks. "O most holy Trinity, O my Jesus, O my love!" He would have been willing to lay down his life rather than see God offended. "Life is a burden to me," he once wrote to a friend; "rather die a thousand times than see God so outraged, and I not able to prevent it or to make amends for it." What did he not undergo to carry

to the most distant countries the knowledge and the love of God? Often he had wished to convert the world, and yet, after many hardships, after having spent himself again and again, he thought he had done nothing. During his meditation he was heard to sigh heavily and to utter words like these. *Quis mihi det ut moriar pro te, ut cognoscant te omnes fines terrae?* And a short time before his death, he said he was resolved, after converting the vast empire of China, to go among the Tartars, then back to Europe, and wage war against the heretics and their lewd morals; he would afterward cross over to Africa, and at last return to Asia to conquer other nations to Christ. See what zeal will do when prompted by love: *Magna res est amor, magnum omnino bonum . . , ad magna operanda impellit, et ad desideranda semper perfectiora excitat . . . Amans volat, currit et laetatur. . . . Amor modum saepe nescit; sed super omnem modum fervescit. . . . De impossibilitate non causatur, quia cuncta sibi posse et licere arbitratur.* (Imit.)

If such is true love, what kind of love is mine? One painful reflection I must make. Francis died at the age of forty-six. In ten years he did wonders for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Alas, I have been a priest for many years, and what have I done for God and my fellow men? And yet, O my soul, the choice must be taken; either to glorify God in this life by loving Him and causing Him to be loved by others, or throughout all eternity be cast away from Him. O my God, I will be Thine and wholly Thine. What has hindered me thus far from loving Thee? Was it myself? If so, I will conquer myself. Was it the devil? I will hereafter resist him. Was it the world and the esteem of the world? I will despise both more than I ever have done.

Second Point.—St. Francis was all for his neighbor; he always aimed at the sanctification of his neighbor: Totus erat proximi. His charity comprised everything in its sweet embrace, the body as well as the soul, time and eternity. He seemed to have been born for the relief of the sufferings of others; to help others was his greatest delight. But he showed his love for his neighbor in a special manner by devoting himself to their salvation. It might be said of him what St. Chrysostom said of St. Paul, that his zeal gave him wings to fly almost to the extremities of the earth in order to save souls. *Quasi pennatus totum peragravit orbem.* When we stop to reckon up all his travels by land and sea, and think of the limited means of transportation in those days, we stand amazed at his having been able to visit so many different countries in so short a time; and yet we know that he preached, baptized, and administered the sacraments in all these

places; we know that everywhere he went he rooted out idolatry, reformed the morals of the people, and planted Christian faith and charity.

To tear from the devil's grasp and give to heaven immortal souls created in the image and likeness of God, and redeemed by the blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, was his only food, his only support, in a word, his whole life. With such a noble aim in view, he looked upon labor as repose, while suffering was a pleasure. Dangers and hardships, far from frightening him, never failed to increase his courage. Were he ever asked to give up the idea of converting the inhabitants of a savage island, the very picture of its degradation would inspire him with an ardent desire of its religious conquest. To all arguments he would answer that if that island had been teeming with gold more than one greedy trader would have long since visited it, and with a feeling of indignation he would add: Will I not do for the sake of souls what others do for gold and silver? "The greatest danger is to lack confidence in God, even in the most trying circumstances." Have I had such love for my neighbor? Both for his temporal and eternal welfare, what compassion have I shown him in his sufferings?

Third Point.—Francis all for himself; that is, he always aimed at his own perfection: Totus erat sui. One of the dangers most common with missionary priests and pastors is, that, forgetful of themselves, they become almost totally absorbed in exterior occupations. Our Lord made this reproach to the bishop of Ephesus: *Scio opera tua, et laborem, et patientiam tuam, et quia non potes sustinere malos.* Thus a priest may be zealous, he may work earnestly and not spare himself, but if he neglect to strengthen his soul by prayer, he will soon lose all his power.[1] After some time a kind of lukewarm piety takes the place of charity: *Sed habeo adversum te, quod charitatem tuam primam reliquisti.* This danger Francis never knew. There never was a priest who worked for his own sanctification with more care than he, while working for the sanctification of others. He had his appointed time to commune with God, and then for the very sake of his neighbor he forgot his neighbor. When he was with God, he used to go up into the church-tower, so that no one might disturb him during his two hours' meditation. While traveling he used to pray from midnight to sunrise. He neglected none of the devotional exercises practised by good priests, viz.: examination of conscience, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, spiritual retreats, etc. And, while living in continual union with his God, he was always ready

[1] Aruit cor meum, quia oblitus sum comedere panem meum. (Ps. ci. 5.)

to do anything that the mercy of God would suggest for the good of souls. Such a life of action blended with holy contemplation I admire in all truly apostolic men; but do I practise it myself?

O Francis, zeal is not extinguished in heaven. Zeal is only the effect of love, and zeal must be even more burning in heaven, where love is made perfect. We beseech you, then, by the zeal you had on earth, by that double love of God and of man, to cast your eyes on those who are priests as you were. The glory of God and the salvation of mankind are intrusted to them; ask of God that they may understand this well, and that they may be able to do all they are intended to do; ask that they may be even as you were: all for God, all for their neighbor, and all for themselves.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Francis all for God. From the day the evangelical saying, *Quid prodest,* flashed on his mind, he learned the vanity of all created things. He had but one desire, to love God and conquer souls. How courageous he was in doing away with everything which might be a hindrance to the divine plan; how much he endured for the sake of carrying the good tidings of the true faith to far-off nations. In ten years he realized his immense projects; and I have been a priest for so many years, and what have I done for God?

Second Point.—Francis all for his neighbor. His charity knew no limits; it included the body, but embraced souls; what burning zeal for their salvation: *Quasi pennatus totum peragravit orbem.* To snatch from the devil and give to Almighty God as many souls as possible was his only ambition; to this end he surmounted everything; dangers were only new encouragement.

Third Point.—Francis all for himself. That is, to his own sanctification. He avoided a danger very common with apostolic men, namely, to forget one's self while working for others. He had his time appointed to commune with God, and then he forgot his neighbor; it was his own hour. In his journeys he prayed, as a rule, from midnight to the rising of the sun. O my God, what a condemnation of my conduct is the example of St. Francis Xavier!

MEDITATION XXII.

MEDITATION ON THESE WORDS: *SATIS EST, DOMINE, SATIS EST.*

THE apostle of the Indies and Japan has left us a complete picture of himself in these words, which tell us eloquently:

1.—*Of His Love for God.*
2.—*Of His Zeal for the Salvation of Souls.*
3.—*Of His Profound Humility concerning Himself.*

First Point.—Satis est, Domine, satis est; his love for God. We see in these words how habitual, how strong, how pure, and how disinterested was his love for God.

I. A soul whose charity is not strong is easily distracted or occupied by sensible things, even at the time of prayer and meditation. Once through prayer, she eagerly plunges into occupations purely exterior, and loses nearly all thought of things of God. But it is not so with a soul firmly attached to almighty God; she never parts with God save with reluctance. Francis found and rejoiced in God everywhere, because God owned every affection of his heart. In the ordinary transactions of life, as well as in solitude, among the crowds of infidels or catechumens who called on him, he always carried heaven with him, because he always was united to God. When he was most taken up with the duties of his ministry, very often overwhelmed with joy and consolation, he was heard to give vent to the feeling of his heart: *Satis est, Domine, satis est.* When performing any duty one would think that he was all taken up with it, but he was at the same time conversing with God.

II. Pure and disinterested love. *Deus meus et omnia. Quid mihi, est in coelo, et a te quid volui super terrum?* This is the love saints have for God, and such was the love of St. Francis. God was the object of all his wishes. Spiritual favors granted to him were, as it were, a burden to the saint. It was a torment to him not to suffer, and also to experience consolation in the discharge of his duties. His desire was to serve the good Master for the love he had for Him, more than on account of himself. "Enough, O my Lord, enough. I fear lest the sweetness of Thy service diminish the purity of my love, and that by many favors I may come to love Thee less, who art the giver." *Haec pura et defaecata*

intentatio voluntatis, says St. Bernard, *Quae nihil habet de proprio, sed totum divinum; sic affici deificari est.* (De Amore Dei.) But oh, how few they are whose love is so disinterested. The Apostle had said: *Omnes quae sua sunt quaerunt?* Dost Thou find at least, my God, such love sometimes in the hearts of Thy priests? Many, perhaps, there are to whom Thou couldst say as Thou didst to the priests of the Old Dispensation: *Quis est in vobis, qui claudat ostia, et incendat altare meum gratuito.* (Mal. i. 10.) I know we are commanded to hope as well as to love, and the thought of the reward has been a great incentive to the most faithful in keeping the law: *Inclinavi cor meum ad faciendas justificationes tuas in aeternum propter retributionem.* I will do so, my God, for I am weak, and can not love Thee in a truly disinterested manner; yet with the help of Thy holy grace I will produce acts of disinterested love as frequently as possible.

Second Point.—Satis est, Domine, satis est: zeal of the saint for the salvation of others. These words show the generosity of his love for his neighbor's salvation, yet that love was discreet and patient.

I. Generosity of his love. His heart is overwhelmed with happiness; he enjoys, as it were, the bliss of heaven while yet on earth, but he sees so many souls around him who know not God and are going to perdition. These he wishes to save. He is afraid that if he stops to enjoy his own happiness, he may some day become insensible to the unhappiness of others. He must not lose one minute that may be employed in saving souls; to instruct them and save them, he will part with everything and every one, even with his God. And how pleasing is such zeal to almighty God. Like Aaron of old, leaving the tabernacle to go with censer in his hands to the dying and the dead; to propitiate the justice of heaven in favor of the children of Israel. This is not, however, to part with God; it is rather to forget self and make place for God.

II. Discreet love. True zeal must of necessity be discreet. To know how far to go and when to stop is not the conduct of him who has but an ordinary virtue: *Magnae virtutis est cum felicitate luctari; magnae felicitatis a felicitate non vinci.* (St. Aug.) Priests have left the care of souls because they liked a life of retirement; others were carried away by imprudent zeal. There is a double danger to be avoided: the one to do more, the other to do less than God has appointed we should do. Francis knew full well he must moderate his zeal, or else he would not do so much good. "Enough, O Lord, enough. Thou demandest of me to be prudent, and I will be prudent;" but the patience and the longing of the saint for suffering are revealed to us yet more clearly in those words.

III. One must be fond of sufferings if he wishes to pass safely through the many trials that must come to every apostolic laborer. St. Francis was fond of sufferings, he thirsted after them. So he was heard lovingly to complain: "It is enough, O Lord, it is enough; why grant so many and so sweet consolations to one who desires only to suffer for Thee and for his fellow men? By the cross, these souls so dear to Thee are to be saved. Allow me, then, to join my poor sufferings with those of the Son of God for my brethren." His passionate love for the cross he manifested in another circumstance. When he was about to start for the Indies, God made known to him how much of tribulation was in store for him, in connection with the salvation of his fellow men, and the saint said: "Still more, O my God, more of tribulations. I welcome with joy the storms and the shipwrecks, privations and sufferings and trials as Thou promisest: *Amplius, Domine, amplius;* only give me more of them." This is heroism in priestly zeal. Can I show any sign of such zeal? If the chalice of sufferings is brought to me, do not I complain of its bitterness; scarcely have I tasted when I say, Enough, O Lord. Were it a question of sensible consolation, oh then I would willingly say: "Give me more, O Lord, more."

Third Point.—Satis est, Domine, satis est; profound humility of St. Francis. St. Francis does not trust himself, he has nothing but contempt for his own person, and his desire is to be despised by all; these are the three marks of true humility, and the words of our text show that they are to be found in our saint.

I. The saints would like, if it were in their power, to render to almighty God as much as they receive from Him. This would be fair and just. But being well acquainted with their own frailty, and knowing that great favors from above must be corresponded to with great fidelity, they dread not making a sufficient return, and therefore they beg of God either to enlarge their hearts to receive His graces, or to lessen the number of these graces, for fear any be lost. "It is enough, O Lord, it is enough; full is my heart. Grant that I never lose the least of the favors poured on my soul. Rather receive less than be exposed not to profit by what Thou grantest." How pleasing such prayer is to almighty God! How the saints acknowledge God's liberality and the excellency of His gifts.

II. Francis not only mistrusts himself, he goes still further: he despises himself. His only fear is the esteem of others. This has been noticed in him all his lifetime, from the day of his conversion. In many of his letters he calls himself a very wicked man, the greatest of sinners, and he asks his brethren to pray for

him. "For my own sake," he one day wrote to a friend, "I must tell in what anguish I am. As God knows the number of my sins and their enormity, I am afraid that on this account our works will prove a failure." The miracles she performed were due, he said, to the innocence of the children through whom he wrought them, or the lively faith of the applicants.

III. The least mark of reverence caused him to blush. When he prayed to God not to lavish so many favors on him—*Satis est Domine, satis est*—he protested that he was unworthy, and feared lest people might be led to respect one whom all should despise.

O my God, if humility is compatible with the possession of that which most excites the admiration of men, such as extraordinary graces, the power of working miracles, etc., how much more easy should its practice be to one who must acknowledge to himself his utter misery. Grant me to cherish humiliations, grant me to be enough of a saint to bear with the contempt of men. I have a thousand times more reasons to annihilate myself in Thy presence, O my God, than the holy priest on whose virtuous life I have been meditating. All his virtues will be mine, if Thou only grant me his humility. Humility draws the eye of God to man, and with it man needs nothing else, for, as St. Andrew says, humility is *Sapientiae solium, grantiae pallium, gloriae praeludium.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—His love for God. "It is enough, O Lord, it is enough!" How strong is such a love. When one loves God with all his heart, he finds God everywhere, in the bustle of life as well as in the solitude of prayer. More than once when he seemed to be altogether taken up with his work, the heart of Francis was burning with intense love, and he was heard to say: *Satis est, Domine, satis est.* How disinterested such love. He had only one desire, God. It was painful to the saint to experience such delights in the discharge of his duties. Enough, O Lord, enough. I fear lest the sweetness of Thy consolation lessen the fervor of my intention, and the abundance of Thy gifts lead me to forget the Giver.

Second Point.—Zeal of St. Francis for the salvation of his neighbor. Though yet on earth, he possesses heaven, but his thoughts are for the many that are going to perdition. Rather part with all, even with God, to help these poor people. He feels that he must moderate his zeal, for fear of going too far, to the detriment of others. He is fond of sufferings. This is the great weapon in the conversion of souls, and this is why he is

heard to complain, Enough, O Lord, give me no more consolations: give me more labor and tribulations: *Amplius, Domine, amplius.*

Third Point.—Great humility. St. Francis mistrusts himself, he despises himself and desires that others should despise him. O God, better it is to receive Thy favors sparingly, than be exposed to the danger of not making good use of them. Hating himself so, he has only one fear—that others may esteem him. What is the meaning of his prayer to God, asking to be spared so many great favors? He means to make a protest of his unworthiness: he is fearful lest the people, at the sight of such favors, may esteem one who deserves only contempt. O my God, give me true humility. Of humility a saint has said: *Humilitas, sapientiae solium, gratiae pallium, gloriae praeludium.*

December 8.—The Immaculate Conception.

MEDITATION XXIII.

THE PRIVILEGE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CONSIDERED IN THE PERSON OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY. GLORY AND HAPPINESS CONNECTED WITH IT.

1.—*Reasons of the Privilege.*
2.—*The Way it was Granted.*
3.—*The Glory that came to Mary through the Immaculate Conception.*

First Point.—The reasons of the privilege of the Immaculate Conception show the greatness and the happiness of the Mother of God. The reasons of this great privilege were the sublime designs of the Almighty on Mary. When the Fathers, in the Council of Trent, treated the question of original sin, which affects all mankind, they openly declared that the decree did not concern the Virgin Mary. Something of this kind must have taken place, we fancy, in the council of the Blessed Trinity, when that decree was issued that all should be born in sin. Each of the three persons brought forth reasons why such a law would have an exception in the ever-blessed Virgin Mary.

The Father saw in her the tender spouse who was to beget in

time Him whom He begot from all eternity; He would not permit that sin should defile her even for one instant.

The Son saw in Mary a mother more dear to Him than ever a mother was to her son, and surely He granted her all in His power. Solomon did not give Bethsabee, his mother, time to ask; he granted before she asked: *Pete, mater mea, neque enim fas est ut avertam faciem tuam.* When God selected for Himself a mother, who would dare say that He was not at least as good to her as Solomon was to his? He knew what His Mother Mary would ask, if, being already in existence, she could have asked anything. He seems to hear her say: "O my Son, what I ask of Thee is that I may always be pure in Thy sight, that every moment of my life, even the very first moment, may belong exclusively to Thee." That prayer must have been heard, O Mother blessed above all mothers; to the end of time it shall be said: *Benedicta sit sancta et immaculata Conceptio Beatissimae Virginis Mariae.* Thy Son owes it both to His love for thee, and to His own glory. Thy blood is to course in His veins. He will not permit that the blood which is to pay the ransom of the world should be tainted at its origin.

The Holy Ghost saw in her the masterpiece of divine workmanship, a being in whom God would receive more glory than in all the rest of the creation. She was to be, properly speaking, the *tabernaculum Dei cum hominibus*, and that dwelling for God among men, He must fittingly adorn. The temple must be worthy of Him who is to dwell therein, of Him who is to build it. To do one and the other, the virtue of the Most High overshadowed Mary, so that not even the least stain is to be found in her.

What could be as honorable to the Blessed Virgin as those titles of Daughter, Mother, Spouse, which so intimately united her to God? Now all these required that she be conceived without sin. That privilege is the foundation of all others, or rather all others are derived from that one. As soon as I know that Mary is conceived without sin, her glorious maternity, her assumption, are no longer a mystery to me. If a mere creature is to be honored, it must be the virgin conceived without sin.

Second Point.—Glory and happiness of Mary in the way in which the privilege is granted. First of all, such a privilege is granted to her alone. God has lavished all His gifts on mankind, but this one He has granted only once. We hear of some saints who were not harmed by ferocious lions, others who felt no pain in the midst of fire. Some whom God sanctified in their mother's womb; but exemption from the stain of original sin was a favor which God granted to no one except to Mary.

And how did God proceed to adorn His Mother with that singular gift? Did He commence again the work of creation, create her as He did the first man that came forth from His hands? If this were the case, the Immaculate Conception would only be a simple derogation from the law established by Almighty God for the propagation of mankind; but no. Of sinful parents, Mary is born without sin; the spring is corrupt, but the stream which flows from it is the clearest of streams. O wonder of wonders! The demon has all the sinful race of Adam under control, one alone excepted, and that one will one day crush his head. An immense fire destroys all, and in the general conflagration a single stem remains untouched; that stem is not scorched nor withered; it is even seen to blossom and yield fruit, and that fruit the salvation of mankind; a cruel tyrant makes a whole land desolate, he holds all under his sway; yet one city resists, and that city becomes the queen of the universe. Well, that privileged one, that miraculous stem, that city, is no other than the Blessed Virgin Mary. "O city of God, wonderful things have been said of thee!" [1]

Count now, if you can, the many privileges which came after the first granted to Mary: All graces and spiritual gifts which made of Mary the holiest person that ever lived, and that at the first moment of her existence; complete use of reason and of all its faculties; exemption from concupiscence and all evil inclinations, which in others are the consequence of original sin; an abundance of light, a facility beyond all others for attaining perfection and corresponding with the interior graces, without ever giving way to the least imperfection. Mary, at the first moment of her existence, is, to use the words of one of the Fathers, *praestantissimum universi orbis miraculum, abyssus miraculorum, tota miraculum.* She is, as St. John Damascene has it, "a world of splendor, a most stupendous creation:" *Quam mundus iste magnificus! Quam stupenda creatio.* (*Sermon on the Nativity of the B. V. M.*)

Third Point.—Honors paid to Mary in connection with the glorious privilege of her Immaculate Conception. The honor paid to Mary in connection with her glorious privilege shows how deep in the heart of man is the devotion to the Blessed Mother of God. When the subject was first broached, the whole world stood amazed. One was reminded of former times, when heretics contested Mary's right, the honor of divine maternity. Clergy and lay people, universities and princes stood up like one man against an opinion detrimental to Mary's honor, and rejected by her chil-

[1] Gloriosa dicta sunt de te, civitas Dei. (Ps.)

dren the world over. Speeches were made, books were written, public demonstrations took place, great solemnities were held in honor of the Mother of God. And the same has been witnessed in our own days, when the infallible voice of the Church proclaimed to the whole world the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. What a sight, what joy in Rome and in every part of the world where the authority of the Church is respected! Everywhere the children of the Catholic Church gave vent to feelings of joy, and welcomed the news of the new honor paid to the Virgin Mother.

Holy Virgin, can one love thee and not rejoice by the honors paid to thee? All is common between mothers and children; the thought of Mary's happiness either causes us to forget our own sorrows or enables us to bear them. Yes; we return thanks to Almighty God with thyself for the great things that have been done to thee. O Mary, accept our congratulations, condescend to love us always, and ask of Jesus that we become every day less unworthy of His love and of thine own: *Gaude, virgo gloriosa, super omnes speciosa. Vale, o valde decora et, pro nobis Christum exora.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Glory and happiness of Mary in the motives of her Immaculate Conception. These reasons were the great designs God had on her. The Father saw in Mary a loving spouse, who was to beget in time Him whom He begot in eternity. The Son saw in her a mother who was to be loved more than any mother on earth; the Holy Ghost saw in her the masterpiece of God's work, in which He would work more wonders than in the whole world. The three divine persons owed her this glorious privilege. Can one imagine anything more glorious than the relationship between Mary and these divine persons, and her future mission which rendered necessary exemption from original sin?

Second Point.—Glory and happiness of Mary in the way in which this privilege is granted. This privilege is granted to her alone in order that the wonder may be the more stupendous. God does not create Mary in the manner He created Adam, but from a corrupt spring He causes to flow the clearest of streams. City of God, how many wonderful things will be said of thee, on account of this privilege, and how many other privileges will follow this one! All graces and spiritual favors; the full use of reason from the first moment of thy conception and exemption from all concupiscence; all these were to be the complement of the privilege of the Immaculate Conception. She was even then a world of splendor, and the greatest of miracles.

Third Point.—Honors paid to Mary on the occasion of the Immaculate Conception. To defend Mary's honor and glorious privilege, the clergy and the laity, universities and princes vied with one another, and what was seen in former ages has been witnessed in our own. Where is the Catholic who did not welcome with joy the dogma proclaiming the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God?

MEDITATION XXIV.

THE PRIVILEGE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION IN ITS RELATION TO OURSELVES—HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO HAVE A SPECIAL DEVOTION TO THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

1.—*Because the Immaculate Conception Teaches many Lessons to Meditative Souls.*

2.—*Because such a Devotion Draws many Blessings upon Those who Practise it.*

First Point.—Lessons learned from the Immaculate Conception. Some of those lessons are fit for all, some are especially adapted to priests.

I. In meditating on this mystery, one must of necessity breathe the sweet perfume of innocence. Whether we consider God dealing with Mary, or Mary dealing with God, all here tells us of the horror due sin, of the esteem due grace, and of the desire we should always have for the greatest perfection.

God bears such a hatred to sin, that even one sin, though it were blotted out immediately, would have been a hindrance to the realization of His plan concerning Mary. On the other hand, grace is of such a price in His sight that in order to favor Mary above all other creatures, He gave her His grace before all other things, in preference to all other things, and in place of all other things. Before all other things.—The first thing He gives her is His grace. She must not be one moment without it. In preference to all other things.—O wonder of wonders; God is about to come among men; He must have a mother. For her sake He will exhaust all His attributes, His wisdom, His power, all His infinite perfections, and what does He do for her? He gives her His grace. Even God has nothing more precious. God can do nothing greater for the one loved above all in creation. In place

of all other things.—Mary will receive spiritual goods, of temporal ones she will receive none. Riches, pleasures, honors after which so many crave, she will not know; the spiritual goods to be hers will be enough, and with the fullness thereof she will enrich the world. Learn now what is the price of grace in God's estimation. Have you had such an exalted idea of it? For your own and for your brethren's sake, did you prefer the grace of God to all other things?

Let us think of the esteem Mary had for grace—she who is called the Virgin most prudent; all her attention was to keep that grace within her; she was eager to profit by it. The conduct of Mary, when compared with ours, should make us blush. She was inclined not, as we are, to evil, but to good, and yet she takes the same precautions we take on account of our frailty; that is, she shuns the world, she watches over herself, works continually, does penance, prays fervently. She is full of grace from the very first moment of her existence, and yet far from resting in security at the thought of all she has received, she disposes herself to receive yet more favors, and so she goes on, ever progressing and increasing in merits, and every day adds to her spiritual treasure. There is in this, we must confess, a double condemnation of our conduct; lack of prudence exposes us to the danger of forfeiting the grace of God, and lack of courage hinders us from increasing our merits. Were we watchful like Mary, the graces we receive would keep us from sin; were we as faithful, we might well attain the perfection of our holy calling.

II. Special lessons for the priests of Almighty God. Mary was the purest of all creatures, free from original sin, confirmed in grace, and adorned with all spiritual gifts, and why? Because she was to be closely connected with the Most High God.

Can not the dignity of the priest be in a measure compared to that of Mary? If Gerson has said of Mary, *tam divina est Maria, ut quidquid Scriptura dicit de Sapientia aeterna, Ecclesia dicat de Maria*—can we not, after St. Ambrose, say of the priest, *Qui sacerdotem dicit, divinum prorsus insinuat virum?* Is he not to some extent like Mary, connected with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in the work of the Redemption? In order to carry in her virginal womb the Word made flesh, it was not enough for Mary to be conceived without sin; the Holy Ghost Himself fitted her for her high mission by the fullness of His gifts: *Ut dignum, Filii tui habitaculum effici mereretur, Spiritu Sancto co-operante praeparasti.* What purity, what holiness must be that of the priest, who every day becomes, as it were, the parent of Jesus Christ on the altar, who touches Him with his hands and receives

Him within himself! *Si haberes angelicam puritatem et sancti Joannis Baptistae sanctitatem, non esses dignus hoc sacramentum accipere, nec tractare.* (*Imitation.*) *Inoffensos et immaculatos decet Dei existere sacerdotes.* (Conc. Tolet. iv. c. x.) The good priest need not fear. His effort to honor Mary in her Immaculate Conception will obtain for him the purity which his holy vocation demands of him.

Second Point.—The Immaculate Conception is a source of consolation to all who honor it. A source of great consolation to all devout servants of Mary is the knowledge they have of her wonderful power with Almighty God. If the Virgin most powerful is for them, who will be against them? And that is why they strive every day to become dearer and dearer to the Mother of God; and who can doubt but she must look with special favor upon those who honor her Immaculate Conception? She loves to have us unite with her in returning thanks to God for her priceless privilege. It is not enough for her to say eternally, My soul magnifies the Lord. She says to all reasonable beings, "Praise ye the Lord with me." And he who heeds such an invitation deserves a large share in the infinite blessings which it is in her power to dispense to mankind. St. Francis Xavier, St. Teresa, St. Alphonsus, Rodriguez, Peter Fourier, Father Avila, and a number of others gave us their own experience when they asserted that we may obtain anything we stand in need of if we honor Mary in her most glorious privilege. Temptations were overcome, plagues averted, and miracles were wrought by this simple act of faith: "Mary was conceived without sin;" or by this simple and childlike prayer: "O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." Remember also the Miraculous Medal, the confraternity of Our Lady of Victories, and the rich treasure of indulgences granted to those who wear the scapular of the Immaculate Conception.

Let us, therefore, be of the same mind with our holy mother the Church, and let us see what we can do to honor this greatest of all Our Lady's privileges and to cause it to be honored by others. The more zealous you will be, the more will you experience the protection of that tender Mother. Your last day is approaching. Soon will you have to give a strict account of the graces you received, of the obligations laid upon you, and, alas, also perhaps of many transgressions. Who will protect you in that dreadful moment? Oh, more than blessed is the priest who can say with confidence to the Mother of Him who is to be his Judge: "I have spoken for thee, Mother Mary, speak now for me; I have fought for thee, fight now for me; I have loved thee, my desire was to make thee loved by others. Oh, save me now!"

Renew your consecration to Mary, and resolve to practise and to spread as far as you can devotion to the Immaculate Conception of our blessed Lady.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Lessons contained for us in the great privilege of the Immaculate Conception. All in this mystery tells us of the horror due sin, of the esteem due divine grace, and the desire we should experience for true perfection. There is such an opposition between God and sin, that even the least strain of sin, though immediately blotted out, would have been a hindrance to the realization of His plans concerning the ever-blessed Virgin Mary. In order to favor her as never a creature has been favored, God gives her His grace before all things else, in preference to all other things, and in place of all other things. This is God's estimation of grace. What is mine? And what an exalted idea of grace Mary had, she who did so much to preserve and increase it within her. She had nothing to fear; yet she took every precaution. I have everything to fear, and am so imprudent. Mary had to be so holy that she might carry the Word made flesh in her womb; is it not the same sacred flesh which is every day present on the altar through my ministry? Is it not the same that I handle, and on which I feed?

Second Point.—Graces we may expect if we are devout to the Immaculate Conception. Mary is all powerful, and nothing will make us dearer to her than our devotion to her most glorious privilege. Her desire is that we join with her in returning thanks to Almighty God for the immense favor granted her. Temptations have been overcome, miracles without number have been wrought by this simple invocation: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee."

December 21—St. Thomas.

MEDITATION XXV.

TENDER MERCY OF GOD FOR ST. THOMAS.

1.—*God's Patience in Bearing with his Incredulity.*
2.—*God's Condescension in Striving against it.*
3.—*God's Victory over the Incredulity of Thomas.*

First Point.—God's patience in bearing with the incredulity of St. Thomas. The sin of Thomas was an enormous one. After all the sermons he had heard and all the miracles he had seen, convinced as he was of the divinity of the Son of God, whom he had heard so often telling of His Resurrection on the third day, the news brought by the holy women ought not to have been a surprise to him, but rather a cause of great joy; yet he calls it a delusion. In the same manner he refuses to believe those who have seen the risen Saviour, those who have spoken to Him and even eaten with Him; according to him, Peter, John, and all the other apostles are mere visionaries, weak-minded people; he alone is of a strong mind. What pride, what presumption is his! He wishes to dictate even to the Lord, he will believe only under such and such conditions: "Unless I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." (John, xx. 25.) He says openly that even if he saw and heard Jesus Christ, he would not believe; he must touch Him. "Unless I put my finger, unless I put my hand!" Why, Thomas, if the hearing and the seeing are not enough to convince you, will you be more convinced by the sense of touch, which is certainly a less delicate sense? One would think he has lost his reason as well as his faith. I will not believe. If he believes not, he is lost. Can one be so rash in risking, as he did, his eternal salvation? The sin of Thomas was not like that of Peter, the sin of a moment; he persevered in it for several days. in spite of all he heard from others, in spite of all the proofs given him. In the conduct of Thomas there was an obstinacy provoking to God and scandalous to men, yet the good Master endured it!

It was no doubt very painful for Mary, for the other apostles and the multitude of believers to have their joy marred by the

obstinacy of St. Thomas; since he refused to hear the Church, why was he not cut off? "If he heareth not the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican." The case is plain, yet Jesus is patient. He wishes others to imitate Him. He can afford to wait. How reluctant is God to abandon a soul He has once loved! And what does He not do to draw that soul from the abyss of misery even after her withdrawal from Him!

Second Point.—God's condescension is striving against St. Thomas' incredulity. Eight days went by, days of joy and happiness for the other disciples, days of anxiety for Thomas. After eight days, Jesus is seen again, and this time the manifestation is for the very purpose of convincing the unbelieving apostle. God condescends to his weakness; in His excessive charity He allows him to verify the assertion he has so rashly made: "And after eight days His disciples were again within, and Thomas with them; Jesus cometh, the door *being* shut, and stood in the midst and said: Peace be to you." How did He enter, all doors being shut? Behold He is in the midst of them, *in medio eorum;* the Shepherd with His flock. At the sight of Jesus in His glory, at the sound of His voice, what a thrill of joy went through them! "Then He saith to Thomas—" Why is he the first to draw the Lord's attention? Peter and John were there; Mary herself, they say, was there. Jesus spoke to none of these. He ignores the dignity of some present, but takes heed of the one who stands in need of His mercy. In this instance we see the heart of Jesus, as shown in the parables of the prodigal son and the good shepherd: He leaves the ninety-nine in the desert, and goeth after the one that hath perished. "Son, thou art always with me; but thy brother was dead and is come to life." (Luke, xv. 31, 32.) "Draw near to Me, faithless disciple, thou art so dear to Me, I will not consent that thou shouldst go to perdition. I will comply with thy request. Behold, here are the hands that have healed the sick, and lavished blessings upon the people. Here are the feet that were so eager to run after the stray sheep; here is the heart that was opened by the lance. Behold, and if to see Me is not enough, touch Me; put thy finger into My hands, bring hither thy hand and put it into My side, plunge it into that heart that loves thee still, and be not incredulous, but faithful: Put in thy finger hither, and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side; and be not incredulous, but faithful." O unutterable compassion! O sweet mercy! O surpassing tenderness! Priests of God, do you thus welcome the poor sinner?

Third Point.—God's victory over the apostle's incredulity. The Saviour, with one glance, illumined Magdalen, and that glance,

according to the language of the Church, was a dart which kindled divine love in her heart: *Currit amore saucia.* With a glance also, He melted into tears the apostle St. Peter who had just denied Him: *Conversus Dominus rexpexit Petrum.* Later still with His name only He will transform Saul into another man on the way to Damascus. "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." But to convert Thomas He makes use of His wounds.

Scarcely has the apostle touched the sacred wounds than faith is restored and he exclaims: "My Lord and my God!" Grief and love will not allow him to say more; grief, for he sees the extent of his sin; love, for he is conquered by the infinite mercy of Him he has so offended, and who, for revenge, heaps favors upon him. In fact, he says all in these few words. He confesses Jesus to be his Lord, "my Lord"; he wishes to serve and love Him. He confesses Him to be his God, *Deus meus;* his only desire is to love Him and to enable others to love Him. He is cured of his blindness and ranked among those who are to be the light of the world. To a certain extent we may apply to him these words of Scripture: *Sicut tenebrae ejus, ita et lumen ejus.* (Ps. cxxxviii. 2.) His incredulity is to be of as much profit as the light of his faith. St. Gregory says even more: *Plus nobis profuit ad fidem Thomae infidelitas, quam fides discipulorum credentium.* (Homil. xxvi.) With what zeal he preaches the Resurrection, in which he believed only because he was compelled to do so by a miracle of the charity of God. He went to preach the Gospel to the Parthians, to the Medes, Persians, Scythians, and Hircanians; and in India at a place called Calamina, he died a martyr, fittingly terminating the apostleship which had won so many souls to Christ. The barbarous king of that country commanded him to be run through with a sword, and when dying his last words are said to have been: "My Lord and my God."

Let us ask, through the intercession of St. Thomas, that ardent and generous faith by which he made atonement for his incredulity; and as we know that the Saviour made use of His sacred wounds to heal both the mind and the heart of His apostle, let us remember that at the altar we partake of His glorified flesh, which is a sure remedy for all evils that may affect the soul: *Quid tam efficax ad curanda conscientiae vulnera, necnon ad purgandam mentis aciem, quam Christi vulnerum sedula meditatio?* (St. Bernard.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—God's patience in bearing with the apostle's incredulity. Thomas' crime was enormous. What pride and pre-

sumption he has! He dictates, as it were, to Christ Himself. How painful this must have been to Mary and the apostles, and what a scandal to all weak-minded and faltering people. His sin is not like the sin of Peter, the sin of a moment; no, it is continued for eight days. Jesus does not permit, however, that the apostle be cut off from the Church.

Second Point.—God's condescension in the apostle's conversion. Our Lord shows Himself once more to the assembled apostles, and this time He manifests Himself for the sake of Thomas. After having said, "Peace be to you," He looks at Thomas, and speaking to him He says: "Come nearer, My apostle. I can not allow thee to go to perdition, rather than comply with thy rash request. See, touch Me, satisfy thyself; but believe." O holy compassion, O surpassing goodness of God!

Third Point.—God's victory over the apostle's incredulity. Scarcely has the guilty apostle touched the sacred wounds of Our Lord than faith is restored and he exclaims: "My Lord and my God!" He can say no more; but he has said really all that he could say. He confesses Jesus as his Lord; he confesses Him to be his God; henceforth he will live only to serve and love God and to win souls to Christ. O Jesus, when dying for Thy sake, with what a loving heart he will utter the same words: "My Lord and my God!"

December 26.—St. Stephen.

MEDITATION XXVI.

THE FIRST OF THE DEACONS.

"Stephen, full of grace and fortitude, did great wonders and miracles among the people, and they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke." (Acts, vi. 8, 10.) Fullness of grace and wisdom and fortitude, resulting from his docility to the Spirit of God; in these words do the Scriptures eulogize St. Stephen; and this is what made him a true minister of Almighty God.

1.—*Full of Grace and Faithful in all his Conduct.*
2.—*Full of Wisdom in his Preaching.*
3.—*Full of Fortitude in his Martyrdom.*

First Point.—St. Stephen full of grace and faithful in all his conduct. He was the first of the deacons: *primicerius diaconorum*, says St. Augustine. In that quality he had charge of what

property belonged to the Church. He had, besides, the care of the widows; those, we mean, who, leaving the world, devoted themselves to the service of God. In that two-fold capacity he was responsible both to God and to man: to God as regarded his conscience, to men as far as his reputation was concerned. Many were the dangers concerning one and the other office, but being full of grace he was found faithful.

I. As a dispenser of the goods that belonged to the Church, he had to be on his guard against one temptation, which had already found a victim among the apostles of the newly born Church of God, and which was to find several more in the course of time. In order that the evil consequences which arise from desire of money might be avoided by the clergy—*Radix omnium malorum cupiditas*—it was necessary, says St. John Chrysostom, that side by side with the crime of Judas, God should set an example and a remedy. The administration of St. Stephen was truly disinterested. As soon as he entered upon the duties of his office, all complaints and grumblings ceased. The poor, being equally relieved, had but words of praise for him. In his charity he sympathized with all miseries, all he received he gave away, and, providing for the necessities of others, he forgot no one except himself. When one is full of grace, how easily he tramples under foot the things of this world, and what contentment he enjoys in his holy poverty!

II. Having care of the widows, his duty was to instruct them, to direct them, to console them. This was not without great danger, both to his virtue and to his sacred character. But he kept himself aloof. His pure morals made him conspicuous. His reputation was so spotless that the most malicious never questioned it. But how did it happen that he was canonized by public opinion while holding an office which could so easily be assailed by calumny? True to the grace he had received, he kept strict watch over himself, and took all precautions inspired by the Spirit of God. He was serious, without affectation; prudent, without dissimulation; mortified and austere, without rudeness; lenient, yet not weak; in a word, he was that true apostolic worker, who never has reason to blush at what he does or says: *operarium inconfusibilem.* In every circumstance his conduct was so prudent, so modest, that his appearance suggested to every one the presence of an angel: *Viderunt faciem ejus tanquam faciem angeli.* The powerful grace by which St. Stephen preserved both his virtue and his fair name unsullied, we ourselves have received; let us be vigilant, austere, men of prayer and mortification.

Second Point.—St. Stephen full of wisdom in his preaching. Detained by duty in Jerusalem, he can not, with the other apostles, carry abroad the tidings of the Gospel, but his zeal, though confined to the limits of one city, is fully as burning as theirs. He preaches in the stronghold of the Jewish religion; thick the cloud he has to dispel, hard the prejudices he has to uproot. What a preacher he was we may see in the speech he made in the synagogue.[1] He reminds the Jews of the crimes of their fathers, and the calamities which visited them as a consequence of those crimes. They themselves had gone further than their fathers, crucifying not only the prophets, but Him who is greater than all the prophets. Having been more guilty, how can they expect less punishment? Had the saint said these things in an overbearing manner, he would but have provoked the anger of his hearers. Being full of wisdom, he tempered severity by moderation, and the strength of the argument by the easy way in which he put it; he said: "Ye men, brethren and fathers, give ear. Brethren, hear ye me; it is through zeal for your salvation that I speak to you thus. I am no stranger to you; I am, like you, a descendant from father Abraham, and I honor you as fathers. But despise not my words, which are the words of God; refuse not the grace which is to-day offered you."

The Scriptures say but a few words on the result of his preaching, yet how much meaning there is in these few words: "And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke." It was not the man who spoke thus; the Spirit of God spoke by him. However, though all were convinced, all were not converted. Many were obstinate, and in order to save them his zeal prompts him to a stronger effort. He breaks forth in reproaches and threats of divine vengeance: "With a stiff neck and uncircumcised hearts and ears you resist always the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do you also." To speak thus was dangerous;[2] but the holy deacon is prepared to sacrifice his own life, rather than prove traitor to the cause he had been appointed to defend. A man of God may be killed, but never conquered.

Third Point.—St. Stephen full of fortitude in his martyrdom. He showed his fortitude when, dying, he forgave his murderers. We see here a double miracle: one of patience, the other of charity.

I. Miracle of patience. "They stoned Stephen, invoking and saying: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Do you wish to know

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[1] Acts, vii.

[2] "Now, hearing these things, they gnashed with their teeth at him."

what he suffered? They stoned him. This was a cruel death reserved for the blasphemer. Do you wish to know how he suffered, and how more than courageous he was? *Invocantem et dicentem;* invoking and saying, Lord Jesus. While he is, as it were, weltering in his blood, what does he do, of what is he thinking? He is invoking the Lord Jesus; he is committing his spirit into his hands: "Receive my spirit." It is only the example and the grace of God that can teach a man to suffer in such a way. Let us listen to the words of the first martyr of Christ: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of God standing at the right hand of God." And we lack strength, the least trouble overcomes us! Oh, let us take courage in the example of this great saint. With the eye of faith let us see the heavens opened; a little patience and we will be there. Behold Jesus standing at the right hand of His Father, looking at us, supporting us, and soon to reward us if we prove faithful.

II. A miracle of charity. A shower of stones crushes the martyr, and he prays for his murderers. He forgets his sufferings, remembers only their blindness. One would say he loves them more than himself. When he prays for himself, he does so standing and in a low tone, but when he is praying for his murderers, he does so on bended knees and with a loud voice, saying: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." How many souls will be saved by the prayer of this hero of charity! The conversion of the apostle St. Paul is believed to have been the first fruit of dying Stephen's prayer: *Nam si martyr Stephanus non orasset, Ecclesia Paulum non haberet; sed ideo de terra erectus est Paulus, quia in terra inclinatus exauditus est Stephanus.* (St. Aug.) After such a sublime prayer, how sweet it must have been for our saint to die: "And when he had said this, he fell asleep in the Lord."

Dying after having given a three-fold testimony to Christ, the testimony of his morals by blameless conduct, the testimony of his word by preaching full of zeal and wisdom, and lastly the testimony of his blood by suffering cruel martyrdom with the courage of a hero—what more can a minister of God do for his Master? O my God, give me a little of the virtue of St. Stephen! May I die, as he did, making an act of perfect charity.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—St. Stephen full of grace among the dangers of his ministry.

I. Having been intrusted with the property of the Church, he had to guard himself against the sin which had been the ruin of

Judas, and, by showing a perfectly disinterested spirit, repair the scandal given by the traitor. St. Stephen gives away all he receives. A heart full of the grace of God is not easily tempted by the riches or the goods of this world. II. In his care for the holy widows, he kept unsullied both his virtue and his fair name.

Second Point.—St. Stephen full of wisdom in his preaching. Though confined to one city, the zeal of St. Stephen is most ardent. In speech he is strong, yet tempered with modesty and mildness: *Viri fratres et patres, audite me.* It was not the man; no, it was the spirit of God that spoke through St. Stephen.

Third Point.—St. Stephen full of fortitude in his martyrdom. When dying he forgives his murderers. A miracle of patience: They stoned Stephen. A miracle of charity: *Invocantem et dicentem.* If, by faith, we behold the heavens opened, we will be as patient and as zealous as St. Stephen for the salvation of our neighbor.

December 27.—St. John the Evangelist.

MEDITATION XXVII.

THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED.

1.—*The Apostle was the Favorite Friend of Jesus.*
2.—*How he Prepared himself for such a Favor.*

First Point.—St. John was the disciple whom Jesus loved. By this John is distinguished from all other apostles, and exalted above all the saints of the New Dispensation. The special love of Jesus for St. John was illustrated on the day of the Last Supper, when He allowed him to lean his head against His sacred breast, and also on Calvary, when the dying Jesus left to his care all He had dearest on earth, His blessed Mother: *Ecce,* "Behold thy mother!"

I. To fully understand the first of these favors, we must recall the circumstances connected with it. It was the eve of the day before Christ suffered; all looked forward to the bloody sacrifice. As a prelude to it, the God-man had just instituted the Sacrament of the altar; His love for man could not go further; "He loved them unto the end." On the other hand, the apostles were in consternation; He had just declared that one of them was to betray Him. While all were vacillating between anguish and fear, what a sight it must have been for them to see John's head lean-

ing on the bosom of Our Lord; while all were seized with fear, John was at rest on the heart of the good Master. Could he have taken such a liberty in so solemn a moment, if he had not been sure of the tender love of Jesus for him? It was Jesus Himself, says Bossuet, who invited him to do so without fear. "Jesus presses John in His arms, draws him close to His heart; He gives him, as it were, possession of His own heart, the source of all his favors, and He gives him leave to rest there, as if it were his own place. Come, oh My beloved, before all ages I have chosen thee to be the doctor of charity; come, then, and drink it in, at its very source; come and learn here those words full of unction by which thou wilt one day move thy fellow men. Draw closer still to this heart, all filled with love for man, and in order the better to speak of My love, feel how I love."

Priest of God, you have the Holy Eucharist, you have the heart of Jesus. Do as St. John did, make it your place of rest when you are tired or grieved. Cast all your anxieties into that Sacred Heart. Go, learn all you are in need of learning, how to know God and love Him. Up to this day St. John, according to St. Hilary, had been but a poor fisherman, knowing only enough to handle his nets: *Manibus lino occupatis, veste humida, pedibus limo oblitis, totus e navi,* a mere boatman. After his mysterious rest on the heart of Jesus, he soars beyond the beginning of time, to find out the principle of all things, to say to the world: "In the beginning was the Word." In the heart of Jesus he saw the uncreated light: *Ipse Joannes sublimium praedicator, et lucis internae atqua aeternae fixis oculis contemplator.* (St. Aug.) There it was, also, that he learned the definition: "God is charity." There it was that he learned the secret of touching and changing the heart of man. The words of the priest will neither touch nor move the hearts of his fellow men unless he himself is devoted, sincerely devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

II. The second favor granted to St. John was on Calvary, when the Son of God was in His agony on the cross. When the end is near, Jesus gives away all that is His own. His blood He gives to men, His paradise to the repentant thief, all His merits to the Church; but His Mother is left to Him, and He gives her to His beloved disciple, and, at the same time the disciple He gives to His Mother: "Behold thy son . . . behold thy Mother." By these words He implants in the heart of Mary the affection of a mother for St. John, who is to be her son, and in the heart of St. John He implants the affection of the most devoted son, that he may love Mary as his mother. And He gave to His apostle all that was necessary fittingly to replace Him. Oh, how holy

he must have been made who was to take the place of Jesus in Mary's love! By his life he was destined to remind her of her Son, to be a living image of Him. Besides, the desire that Mary there formed, to render this image as perfect as possible, occasioned additional graces to be granted to John. The charity of the adopted son was increased by the daily contact with the loving heart of Mary.

The Mother of God became on Calvary the mother of all Christians, but in an especial manner the mother of priests. If St. John, as a disciple, represented all the Christians, as an apostle he represented the clergy. Every good priest can say. The heart of the Word incarnate belongs to me; Mary is my mother, I also am the beloved of Jesus. But what shall we do to show ourselves worthy of such a favor?

Second Point.—How St. John prepared himself to become the beloved of Jesus. The purity and the fidelity of the apostle may account, according to the Fathers, for the predilection on the part of Jesus for St. John. Because he was a virgin, he was granted the privilege of resting on the heart of Jesus, and because he never wavered in his fidelity, Mary was given him for a mother.

I. Of all the disciples of Jesus, St. John was the only one who lived in the state of virginity, and no one can be surprised that he was called, in preference to others, the beloved disciple: *Qui diligit cordis munditiam, habebit amicum regem.* Jesus Himself was the Son of a virgin, the teacher and model of sublimest virginity; whom, then, among the apostles could He love better than the one who resembled Himself? Who was better entitled to rest on the heart of the King of angels than St. John, who was so little below the angels? If ever there was one worthy of the confidence of the thrice-holy God, to whom eternal secrets might be made known, it was surely our saint, who, by the purity of his heart, deserved even then to see God. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God. This is the first reason why John was the beloved of Jesus: *Diligebat eum Jesus, quonium specialis praerogativa castitatis ampliori dilectione fecerat dignum.* (St. Gregory.) The second reason was the constancy of his love.

II. Many are friends in times of prosperity, few when things go ill. Many of the disciples followed Jesus to the hall of the supper, few were at the foot of the cross. We are true to God as long as He makes straight the way, and supports us by His grace but as soon as the hour of sacrifice arrives we lack courage we falter at the sight of the chalice. Yet then it was and there that Jesus awaited us; had we been constant, we would indeed have become His beloved; see how the constancy of St. John was re

warded. All the others fled; he alone follows his Master to the foot of the cross, he alone stays there with unflinching perseverance. The dying Jesus has a treasure He wishes to dispose of; to whom will He bequeath it except to him who is so persevering in his love? "When Jesus, therefore, saw His Mother, and the disciple standing whom He loved, He said to His Mother: Woman, behold thy son." .

Let us make our choice. We have seen how St. John became the dearly beloved friend of the Son of God. Oh, holy purity, oh, heavenly innocence, oh, constant love, when shall we esteem you as we ought? By the practice of these virtues, we can have Mary for our Mother and Jesus for our Friend.

When at the altar to-day, let us be more fervent than usual. Soon we will possess the heart on which St. John rested; let us give ourselves up to Jesus, and, after communion, let us ask of Him to say to Mary what He said pointing to St. John: "Woman, behold thy son." St. Gertrude says that this prayer is pleasing to Jesus, and that He always hears it.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—St. John was that disciple whom Jesus loved. The predilection of the Saviour for this apostle is manifested in two peculiar circumstances: at the Last Supper and on Calvary. At the Last Supper the apostles were all in sorrow on account of the words Jesus had just spoken: "One of you will betray Me." It was at that moment that John leaned his head on the breast of his Master. To show such familiarity he must have been assured beforehand of the tender affection of Jesus. Jesus Himself drew John near His heart and gave him possession of it; and what benefits did he draw from that immense treasure? O priest of God, you have access to the same heart in the Holy Eucharist. While dying on Calvary, Jesus gave His Mother to St. John, and He also gives John to Mary. As a disciple, John represented the whole Christian world; as an apostle, he represented the priests of God's Church.

Second Point.— How St. John prepared himself to become the beloved of Jesus. By his purity and constant love. The tender love of Jesus, the Son of the Virgin, the doctor and the model of virginity, was assured to one who, like Himself, was a virgin; the constancy of his love also made him very dear to Our Lord. While all others left Him, John followed Him to the foot of the cross. Virginal purity and constant love—these, then, will prepare me to possess the heart of Jesus. these will give me Mary for my Mother.

January 25.—Conversion of St. Paul.

MEDITATION XXVIII.

A SIGNAL MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S MERCY.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons.*
2.—*Listen to what They Say.*
3.—*Consider what They Do.*

First Prelude.—Saul was on the way to Damascus, there to persecute the disciples of the Saviour with the fierceness he had already displayed in Judea, when he finds himself surrounded by an extraordinary light. He falls to the ground. He is, as it were, thunderstruck, and he hears a voice which says: "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute Me?" "Who art Thou, O Lord?" The same voice answers: "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." Trembling and astonished, Saul adds: "Lord, what willest Thou that I should do?" At the command of Jesus Christ he rises from the ground, and, some one leading him, for he has now lost his sight, he goes to the city, where Ananias will tell him what to do. Ananias restores his sight, and baptizes him, and from that moment Saul becomes an ardent apostle of Christ.

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself a certain open spot a short way from Damascus. There is Saul, and with him a number of people, who have come to help him carry out his murderous designs against the Christians.

Third Prelude.—Ask of God to give you the knowledge and a deep sense of His infinite mercy, which has brought about and continues to bring about so many wonderful conversions.

First Point.—Consider the persons. In heaven Jesus Christ casting an eye of pity on His fierce persecutor, whom He is to change into a vessel of election for the good of the Church and the sanctification of many: "This man is a vessel of election to Me, to carry My name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel." On earth see the terror of the Christians at Damascus when they hear of the coming within their city of that fierce enemy, when they hear of his murderous designs. At Jerusalem the priests are jubilant when Saul comes and asks for power to persecute the Christians; he was to be the fit instrument of their hatred. On the way, among his companions, there were many whose designs

were fully as dark as Saul's. Let your attention dwell especially on Saul, the leader of the persecution.

Reflect on his violent temper, his pharisaical heart,[1] his attachment to the religion of the Jews.[2] He is provoked when the religion of Jesus is mentioned in his hearing; his eyes, his countenance, his frame shows that he is a man thirsting for blood, one who has already shed some and is eager to shed more; breathing out threatenings and slaughter. How triumphant he is when he sees Damascus! And then of a sudden see him on the ground, shivering from head to foot, trembling and astonished. His companions, too, are struck with amazement. A few days afterward see him humbly receiving baptism, preaching the Gospel and confounding the Jews. Adore the power and the great mercy of the Son of God. Share the joy of the faithful, when they saw in their midst a fearless defender, a friend and a brother, in the person of him who started for Damascus to destroy all Christians. Say with them: "Give glory to the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endureth forever."

Second Point.—Listen to the words. The priests compliment Saul on his zeal for the Jewish law; they say they will lend all the help they can, in order to destroy a sect which they hate so much. Saul thanks them, and tells them he will bring bound in chains to Jerusalem all the Christians he will lay his hands on: "That if he found any men and women of this way, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." Pay attention especially to the voice of Jesus Christ: "Saul, Saul!" God calls him by name, calls him twice. He questions him, to give him a chance to consider himself and to reflect on his wicked conduct: "Why dost thou persecute Me? Why didst thou take arms against Me? I live in every one of those whom thou persecutest, and all their sufferings at thy hands are Mine. What did I do to thee, what complaint hast thou against Me? Thou askest who I am, I will tell thee: I am Jesus, God made man in order to save man. I am the Redeemer foretold by the prophets and denied by all nations. Ah, how dearly I paid for thy salvation! Behold My wounds, and say if I deserved not to be loved rather than outraged. I am Jesus, whom thou dost persecute." How sweet this word: I am Jesus! How touching the reproach: Whom thou dost persecute! It is God Himself who proposes reconciliation, and to whom? What compassion! And yet He comes not to punish; no, to offer forgiveness.

What does Saul answer? "Lord!" O Lord, too late I have known Thee, O Thou the Messias, O my Redeemer! It was against

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[1] "I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees." (Acts, xxiii, 6.)
[2] "Abundantly zealous for the traditions of my fathers." (Gal. i, 14.)

Thee that I have uttered so many blasphemies! And Thou forgivest; and this is the only revenge Thou takest of Thy persecutor. O my Master, O my God, what can I do now but love and serve Thee? "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" What must I offer, what can I do? These words of Saul are few, yet how full of meaning, how expressive, how energetic: *O verbum breve, sed plenum, sed vivum, sed efficax!* (St. Bernard.) These words express the humility, the hope, the love of the future apostle; full of meaning, he is going to lead a far different life; the radical change will be a lasting change. By giving himself up to the will of God, the sinner of former times becomes a great saint in a very short time, and he secures for himself a glorious destiny.

Third Point.—Consider what is done. Confine yourself to what is done by Saul and by Our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus had been already persecuted by this arch-enemy, when the first martyr had been slain, we may say, at his hands; it was he stoned St. Stephen through the hands of his murderers; this is the opinion of St. Augustine: *Ut esset in omnium lapidantium manibus, ipse omnium vestimenta servabat.* The fight is not yet over. To speak ill of, to calumniate the person or the doctrine of Christ, to arouse the hatred of all against Him, and to destroy His Church, all these is not the passing thought of Saul, for in him it is an actual disposition, a necessity, a profession; we all know what he meant to do when he reached Damascus.

But what does the Lord? It was in His power to convert Saul by a sudden inspiration, by the preaching of the apostles, by the miracles which were of daily occurrence in Judea. He had sent Moses to Pharao, Jonas to the Ninivites. But He in His own person converts Saul. True, through Saul He will save souls without number, but how patient He is with his wickedness! With what kindness He raises him up from the ground where he lay prostrate! How sweet His voice when addressing him! The outward light is only a figure of the one which illumines his soul. How many sublime revelations were made to him in one instant, at the sound of the adorable name which was pronounced within his hearing, and which he then understood. Hereafter he will never ask again: "Who art Thou, O Lord?" Oh no, he knows Him now, he loves Him. He is eager to give his life if by doing so he can make Jesus known and loved.

Now in unrestrained colloquy pour out your own heart to the heart of Jesus, so filled with mercy and compassion. The greatest favor we can do Him is to honor Him with our confidence. Treasures are laid open before you; draw therefrom for you and for your brethren, but return thanks to God for the conversion of Saul,

an event which has been of so great consequence for the Church. To the end of time, this miraculous event will illustrate to the world the surpassing mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. From heaven, Jesus Christ looks with pity on the persecutor whom He will soon make His apostle. On earth at Damascus, the faithful are terrified when they are apprised of Saul's coming; in Jerusalem the priests are jubilant over his plans of extermination. On the road contemplate Saul, the leader and the soul of the persecution. Study his violent temper; all in him breathes terror, a man thirsting for blood. Yet suddenly you see him prostrate on the ground, pale and trembling; and afterward you behold him preaching the Gospel and confounding the Jews. Admire both the goodness and the mercy of God. Join in the joys felt by the Christians of those days.

Second Point.—Listen to what is said. The priests compliment Saul on his zeal for the Jewish Law. Listen with special attention to the voice of Jesus Christ: "Saul, Saul!" Why does He call twice? "Why dost thou persecute Me?" What complaint hast thou against Me? Thou wishest to know who I am. I will tell thee: I am Jesus. See these wounds; judge if I deserve to be outraged or loved by thee. Think next of the words said by the converted persecutor: "O Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?"

Third Point.—Consider what is done. What Saul does in Judea and what he intends to do in Damascus. He is the destroyer of the Church of Christ. What does the Saviour? In order to convert this great sinner He comes down from heaven. Oh, with what kindness He raises him up when he lies prostrate on the ground! How many mysteries were made known to him when he was given to understand the meaning of the adorable name Jesus! Hereafter he will not say: "Who art Thou, O Lord?" How eager he is now to make Jesus known and loved!

January 29.—St. Francis of Sales.

MEDITATION XXIX.

STRENGTH AND ENERGY OF HIS MEEKNESS.

We know Mary Magdalen by her tears of repentance, St. Teresa by the ecstasies of her love, St. Francis by his love of poverty,

St. Francis de Sales by his meekness; yet are there many who have a correct idea of this virtue of St. Francis? St. John Climacus asks himself the question: What is the meekness becoming a minister of Christ, that meekness which is to conquer the world and destroy error; that meekness to which possession of the earth is promised —that is, the ruling over the minds and hearts of men? And he answers: That such meekness is more than human, that it is celestial, as only God made man could teach such virtue to man, both by His words and by His example. Meekness springs from fortitude, just as fortitude springs from faith and love: "Out of the strong came forth meekness." (Judges, xiv. 14.) And St. John Chrysostom goes still further when he says: *Nihil hac pastorali mansuetudine violentius.* Such was the meekness of St. Francis de Sales.

1.—*Unswerving Meekness in his Undertakings.*
2.—*Perseverance in his Undertakings.*

First Point.—Unswerving meekness in his undertakings. The saint was ready to sacrifice everything for the honor of God—nature, riches, and the esteem of men.

I. Early in life, feeling that God called him to the ecclesiastical state, he did all in his power to sanctify himself that he might better sanctify others. He goes deep into the recesses of his heart, studies every emotion of that heart, and, laying nature aside, subdues all there is of man in him in order that all in him may be of God. He had to overcome more than one obstacle before he acquired the virtue of meekness. In temper he was quick and fiery; noble by birth and surrounded with attention, praise, and flattery; with a tender and loving heart, and one which could be easily wounded. Such was our saint. What opposition he met when he declared that he would become a priest. Under such trials it is not enough to be courageous, one must often be cruel: *Per calcatam perge patrem, per calcatam perge matrem.* (St. Jerome.) Trials still worse were in store for him when he was appointed to Chablais. The first time mention was made of such an appointment by his bishop, it struck terror into every heart. Yet Francis was the first to offer himself for the dangerous undertaking. And when this became known to the members of his family they made use of every argument at their disposal; recrimination, even tears were in vain. He heard all his loving father said when trying to dissuade him, but he heard more attentively what the Father in heaven said to his heart: "Go forth out of thy country and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall

show thee." (Gen. xii. 1.) He was sensible to the sighs of his mother, who complained bitterly, but he was more sensible to the voice of Mother Church speaking to him in the words of the mother of Machabees: "My son, have pity on me, that bore thee nine months in my womb . . . and brought thee up unto this age." (2 Mach. vii. 27.) Having so conquered himself, his soul became ablaze for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; having overcome nature, it did not cost him much to part with the things of this world.

II. Fondness for the goods of earth is not a thing uncommon, even among those who serve at the altar. Since the passion of money entered into the heart of an apostle, every priest must be on his guard. Again, one who does not care for money may not be insensible to honors. In the world people care for riches; in the ministry priests are apt to look for the highest places. St. Francis never knew such temptation; he was perfectly disinterested. He became bishop of Geneva, but only through obedience. When offered the archiepiscopal see of Paris, he answered: "My bride is my church; poor and desolate as she is, it would be a double sin for me to leave her for one richer and more flourishing." They thought of making him a cardinal, but he sternly refused. He wants nothing for himself, but he goes begging for his poor people. This is the way saints make use of their credit with the rich of this world.

III. Yet that credit Francis never courted at the expense of his conscience; though anxious to please, he was more anxious to do good. A true servant of Christ, he looked not for favor with men. "If I pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ." Henry IV. once said of him: "I reverence him because my favors never tempted him, and I love him because in his advice he never flattered me." He cared very little for the anger of the chief magistrates of Thonon; in spite of their opposition he built the first church in the place, and restored Catholic worship in their midst. He never sided with the narrow-minded council of the king of Savoy; he advised the sovereign to interdict heresy and to dismiss his ministers. His meekness, therefore, was not accompanied with weakness; but it was the mainspring of his fortitude. A man who is truly master of himself uses in the fight, if needs be, all the nerve given him by nature as well as by the grace of God. And thus it happens that a good priest is never deterred from what he undertakes with true zeal.

Second Point. — Perseverance in his undertakings. The saint was ready for any emergency. Difficulties, oppositions, persecutions, nothing was able to slacken the zeal of this apostle.

I. The mission of Chablais was a field on which much labor must be spent. He was the personification of the good shepherd of whom we read in the Gospel, going after the stray sheep and taking it home upon his shoulders. His charity carries him to the roughest places where he can console some forlorn brother, or save a soul. He journeys through snow and storm, crosses rivers, climbs rugged mountains. Among the ruins of destroyed sacred edifices, he is seen addressing the little flock he has succeeded in gathering around him. If, at the sight of his immense work, one asks him to spare his health, his answer is that to him to live is to do the work of God; he is like the husbandman, the heavier the burden the more contented he is. Always hearing confessions, or preaching the word of God, or traveling. He never stops to rest.

II. Oppositions. He met with some that were enough to discourage any other but himself. Heretics are not easily conquered; they are slow to surrender, and, as a rule, they are sullen. Peter de Blois used to say: To convert a sinner is a great work; to turn a heathen into a Christian is greater; but to convince a stubborn heretic is nothing less than a miracle. How great must have been the constancy of St. Francis' zeal, especially in the early days of his missionary life; how many useless journeys, how many apparent failures! He has just rebuilt a church, a mob demolishes it. He has just convinced a famous preacher [1] and he sees him dying in his heresy. If he had said, as so many of us would have under similar circumstances, there is nothing to do, what would have become of that unfortunate country?

III. Persecutions. An attempt is made against his life, his reputation is assailed; for three years he is the victim of base calumny. God, it is true, protected him; yet how he must have suffered. Under all these trials the holy bishop never flinches; he is always himself. Nothing disturbs the tranquillity of his pure soul. He conquers all by his charity, he returns good for evil, returns love for hatred: this is his revenge. Surely he was a model of meekness and fortitude.

Reflect now on yourself; is your zeal truly active? When the glory of God or the salvation of souls requires it, do you trample under foot nature, riches, and the esteem of men? When at your work are you persevering and patient? Do you combine, as our saint did, meekness and fortitude? At the holy altar you feed on the flesh of the Lamb of God; oh, how meek in His immolation, and yet how strong, how loving. Ask Him to give you a share in

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[1] Theodorus de Beze.

these two virtues which were blended together in St. Francis de Sales.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Unswerving meekness in his undertakings. The saint was able to make any sacrifice—nature, earthly goods, the esteem of men. Nature: How many efforts he had to make in order to become truly meek, and in order to follow God when his own flesh and blood protested! Earthly goods: Those who care little for money sometimes look for honors; not so St. Francis. The esteem of men: Henry IV. used to say: "I reverence him because my favors never tempted him, and I love him because in his advice he never flattered me."

Second Point.—Unchanging in the execution of what he had undertaken. He knew how to endure all, work, opposition, and persecution. There never was a harder mission than that of Chablais, but nothing could daunt or discourage him. An attempt was made against his life, his reputation was assailed, and for three years he was the victim of base calumny. He returned good for evil, love for hatred. Was he not truly a model of both meekness and fortitude?

MEDITATION XXX.

FRUITS OF HIS MEEKNESS.

1.—*For Himself.*
2.—*For the Church.*

First Point.—What were the fruits of St. Francis de Sales' meekness for himself? An eminent holiness, and the most precious consolations which the heart of a priest may desire.

I. As charity alone makes apostles, so it alone makes saints. If I have not charity, I have nothing, I am nothing; but if I possess this queen of virtues, all the law is accomplished, I am a saint. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Now meekness is the flower of charity; it is the first virtue which we should learn at the school of Jesus Christ. "Learn of Me because I am meek." It merits for us the appellation of children of God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, because they shall be called the children of God," because it makes us His faithful images: *Nihil adeo vicinum*

Deo, conformemque facit quam ista virtus. (St. Chrys.) Perfect meekness is renouncement of all the passions, of one's entire self, since all is to be sacrificed to it. It is, therefore, the grave of all vices; it is also the cradle of virtues.

It communicates to us in particular three virtues which are, as it were, the essence of pastoral goodness, viz.: patience, compassion, and condescension: Patience to bear with the defects of our neighbors; compassion to feel their sorrows, willingness to remedy them.

It is also an inexhaustible source of graces; because the meek soul is in an excellent disposition to pray well, and because its prayer is ever pleasing to God. "The prayer of the meek has always pleased Thee." (Judith, ix. 16.) Moreover, meekness can be continually practised, for it demands continual watchfulness and mortification, so that every inclination that would be contrary to it may be perceived and repressed; hence comes a rich treasure of merits and multiplied claims to heavenly rewards.

Meekness is sacred love lifted up to heroism, a love which borrows greater ardor from the insults we receive, from the persecutions or other evils we have to bear. St. Francis de Sales used to say: "We should be glad to have our head among the thorns of repugnances, that our heart should be transfixed with the lance of contradictions. We must drink the gall, swallow the vinegar, because God wishes it; and amid all this we should preserve a meekness that will pass from the heart to the lips and the countenance."

What, then, is perfect meekness? It is nature perfectly subjected to grace; it is the life of faith, the life of God in us; it is consummated holiness. "He sanctified him in his faith and meekness." (Ecclus. xlv. 4.) Behold the fruit of a virtue which all pronounce to be amiable, but of which the whole value and fecundity are little known.

II. Even in this life, God rewarded the meekness of St. Francis de Sales by consolations proportionate to the efforts which it had cost him for its acquisition. A heart like this takes its greatest delight in making others happy, and for a zealous priest no joy can compare with that which he experiences in working for his flock. The nearer to hell his dear sheep would stray, the more would he rejoice upon seeing them return into the right road, and advance toward heaven. As much as the outrages offered to God afflicted His heart, so much He is consoled by the homages which are rendered to Him. Great was the gratitude and wonder of St. Francis when he saw the benediction which God poured down upon his labors and the miracles of grace He wrought through

his ministry! How often he mingled his tears with the sweet tears of converted sinners! How sweet for his heart was the day on which Jesus Christ, concealed under the veil of the Sacrament, re-entered in triumph the capital of a province whence He had been banished during seventy years! O Priest, O Pastor! of how many sacred, delightful joys you deprive yourself when you have no zeal, or when it is destitute of that meekness which imparts to it its efficacy!

Second Point.—Happy results of the meekness of St. Francis de Sales for the Church. It honored the Church, extended its empire, and provided it with new spiritual means for the sanctification of her children.

I. The meekness of St. Francis gave honor to the Church in the eyes of those who knew it not; we mean the men of the world and heretics. Men of the world try to persuade themselves that Christian virtue is incompatible with the duties of civil life; to them St. Francis showed, in his person, a life which was in almost entire conformity with the lawful rules of the world, united to a fervor worthy of the most beautiful ages of the Christian religion; in him they admired illimitable condescension and great delicacy of conscience—the virtues which the Gospel requires, together with the qualities which the world esteems. As for heretics, they reproached the Catholic clergy with being avaricious, ambitious, proud. In St. Francis they saw a man who, in order to become a clergyman, had sacrificed a large fortune, bright hopes, great dignities. It was known that St. Francis accepted the power of authority out of obedience only; that from his entrance into the ministry he deprived himself of everything, making himself poor in order to relieve the poor; that he was an enemy of splendor and display, journeying on foot to visit the villages of his diocese, teaching the simple people, catechising the children. His modesty, humility, and meekness caused the prejudices of heretics to vanish away.

II. The meekness of St. Francis extended the empire of the Church. It is reckoned that he brought back to its fold 72,000 heretics. Through his zeal the whole of the Chablais and a considerable part of the diocese of Geneva returned to Catholic religion. Now these conquests were made through the irresistible charm of his meekness. Heretics, says St. Augustine, are much more easily converted through kindness than through disputes. The kind bishop of Geneva found no difficulty in convincing those stray souls that he loved them, and that he deplored their misfortune. He knew how to touch their hearts, and they returned to the faith.

III. Finally, the writings of St. Francis, and the new Order which he founded, have enriched the Church with new means of sanctification for her children. Francis is ever living in his precious works, wherein everything breathes peace, confidence, and heavenly charity. They are at the same time solid and full of unction; they show that perfection consists in the discharge of the most common duties of Christian life, and they establish its necessity upon the most pressing of all motives, viz.: the love of God and the love of Jesus Christ.

Charity also it was which inspired in him the idea of founding the Visitation Order, an asylum offered to so many Christian virgins, who, if not for it, would have remained in the world because the feebleness of their body did not correspond with their spiritual fervor. Thus it has come to pass that St. Francis, through the charms of his meekness, still continues his apostolic mission; he enlightens, he consoles, he edifies.

As you desire to adorn your soul with a virtue which gains for us the love of God and of men, try to find which inclination is most opposed to it, and on what occasion you more frequently sin against meekness. Fight courageously, foresee the occasion, but above all pray with fervor.

O Domine, quia ipsa bonitas es et mansuetudo! ostende mihi faciem tuam; videam clementiam frontis tuae, dulcedinem oculorum tuorum, suavitatem labiorum tuorum, benignitatem manuum tuarum, pulchritudinem gressuum tuorum; et super haec, eminentem caritatem cordis tui. Habeam te prae oculis semper, ut infinita amabilitate tua captus, mansuetudinem tuam induere studeam et imitari. (Memorial. vit. sacred, c. 46.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Fruits of the meekness of St. Francis de Sales for himself. An eminent holiness; the most precious consolations which a priest's heart may desire. Meekness is the flower of charity, and if I have charity, I accomplish the whole law, I am a saint. Meekness communicates to us the virtues of patience, condescension, and compassion, which form, as it were, the essence of pastoral goodness. It is an excellent disposition to pray well, and the good prayer draws upon us all the graces. Perfect meekness means nature perfectly subjected to grace; it is the life of God in us; it is consummated holiness. God rewards it even on earth by consolations proportionate to the efforts which its acquisition has cost. This we saw realized in St. Francis de Sales; the further

his dear sheep went astray, the more he rejoiced to see them return.

Second Point.—Beneficial results of St. Francis' meekness for the whole Church. The meekness of our saint honored the Church by causing it to be known and honored by Christians given up to the spirit of the world and heretics. The kind charity of St. Francis de Sales also extended the empire of the Church through the conversion of many heretics, the writing of many excellent works, and the foundation of an Order of religion. Through the charms of that meekness which we breathe in his writings, and the piety of the souls instructed at his schools, St. Francis still continues his apostolic mission.

SECTION SECOND.

Lent and Paschal Time.

PROPER OF THE TIME.

The Church sets apart forty days for recollection and penance as a preparation for the great festival of Easter. This holy custom is the most powerful means employed by the Church for reviving the sentiment of their vocation in the hearts of the faithful. It is quite important that they should profit by those days of grace for the renewal of their spiritual life. It was therefore proper that the faithful should be prepared for this time of salvation, which is itself a preparation, so that, the voices of the world dying out by degrees in their souls, they might give more attention to the solemn warning of Ash Wednesday. (D. Gueranger, *Annee liturg.*)

The three Sundays which precede Lent are named *Septuagesima, Sexagesima,* and *Quinquagesima.* because they are the seventh, the sixth, and the fifth before that of the Passion. "The first Sunday of Lent being called *Quadragesima,* because it is the first of the quarantine. They who began their fast eight days earlier, named *quinquagesima,* the Sunday on which the fast began; by the same reason they who began their fast on either of the two preceding Sundays, named the one *sexagesima* and the other *septuagesima,* by going backwards in each case." (Bergier, Dict. Theol.) Those three weeks are therefore the preiude to the sorrow and the tears of repentance which will purify us, and will prepare us to worthily celebrate our resurrection, that is, our passage to a more holy and blessed life. We begin, as it were, our penance, in order to undertake our penance courageously when the Church gives the signal.

Septuagesima Sunday.

MEDITATION XXXI.

PARABLE OF THE LABORERS SENT INTO THE VINEYARD.[1]

1.—*All Men are Called to Cultivate the Vineyard of their Soul.*
2.—*To this Calling Priests should Add that of Working for other Souls.*
3.—*When and in what Manner shall the Laborer be Rewarded?*

First Point.—All men are called to cultivate the vineyard of their soul. God is the householder who goes out early in the morning to seek for laborers amid the cares, the affairs, and pleasures of the world. Wherever we may happen to be, He urges us to labor for our sanctification by employing in His service all the faculties which we receive from His goodness. *Vinea est anima cuique excolenda. Quae facit vinitor in vinea, haec faciat fidelis in anima.* (Cornel., *in Matt.* xx.) If I apply my intelligence to know God, my memory to remember His blessings, my heart to love Him; if I am faithful to discover and fight against my defects, to regret my falls, I cultivate the vineyard of my soul, and make it fruitful in works of holiness. *Revirescit anima tanquam vinea per flores et folia, id est, per sancta desideria et sermonem aedificantem. Producit lacrymas compunctionis, emittit odorem virtutis, juxta illud Canticorum Vineae florentes dederunt odorem suum; edit maturas uvas bonorum operum.*—(Ibid.) This vineyard is the Lord's; this vineyard He planted, and He watches over it. Accidentally, His glory is the rent He requires from it; His essential glory does not depend on us, and He in reality hires us to do a work of which all the profit is ours. The price of our day's work will be the rich reward of heavenly happiness; "having agreed with the laborers for a penny a day." This day's work is life; we owe the whole day to Him whom we are bound to serve always. What is a day's labor compared with an eternity of rest? The Master sends the laborers at different hours to signify the different times in life at which men give themselves to God by yielding to the action of grace.

O Priest of God, was there ever a vineyard chosen, guarded,

[1] "The kingdom of God is like to an householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard." (Matt. xx. 1.)

cared for, as your soul is? Has it brought forth everything that the good Master had a right to expect? Is it not to you that He says: "I planted thee a chosen vineyard with all good seed. How then art thou turned unto Me, into that which is of nothing worth? O strange vineyard." (Jer. ii. 21.) "What is there that I ought to do to My vineyard, that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes?" (Is. v. 4.) He deigned to call you to Him from your childhood. Your education, your preparation for the priesthood, was a continual and pressing invitation to rid yourself of the world and unite yourself to God. How often, since you became a priest, has He inspired you with the thought of giving yourself to Him more perfectly? Does the thought present itself to your mind at this very moment? Does it touch your heart? What will you do? Which hour of the day is it for you? You may have reached the last hour.

Second Point.—To this calling priests should add that of working for other souls. If a single soul has so much value in the eyes of Jesus Christ that He is disposed to give for it His bloody sweat, His tears, what will be His solicitude for the Church, wherein are gathered all the souls which belong to Him by faith? Hear the prophets, and the Gospel itself, speaking of His affection for the mystical vine. "My beloved had a vineyard on a hill, on a fruitful place . . . and he fenced it in . . . and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst thereof, and set up a wine press therein." (Is. v. 1, 2.) "There was a man, a householder, who planted a vineyard, and made a hedge round about it, and dug in it a press, and built a tower." (Matt. xxi. 33.) The Son of God, through His Incarnation and the other mysteries of His life on earth, came Himself to plant this vineyard. He hedged it with His law; He appointed His angels and His ministers to watch over it; the tower, which He built in it, means the perpetual assistance which preserves it from every error. This Church of Jesus Christ is also under the protection of Mary. "The tower of David which is built with bulwarks, a thousand bucklers hang upon it." (Cant. iv. 4.)

Congratulate yourself, O Priest of God, on having been sent to this vineyard, on being called to succeed so many indefatigable laborers, who made it bring forth such admirable fruits. "Go you also into My vineyard." "Be not," says St. Bernard, "one of those churchmen who have found the secret of separating that which is painful in their condition, from that which is agreeable and easy:" *Advertere est prudentiam aliquorum, et mirari quemadmodum novo inter haec artificio discernentes . . . totum quod delectat*

eligunt et amplectuntur, quod molestum est fugiunt atque declinant. Sudant agricolae, putant et fodiunt vinitores, et clerici inter haec torpent otio, vivunt tritico, bibunt uvae sanguinem meracissimum: parum est, impinguantur et dilatantur adipe frumenti . . . madent deliciis otiosi. (Tract de Morib. cleric.) When pastors have adopted this injurious system, God's vineyard has to suffer, not only from neglect, but also from scandals. Then the desolation has come to pass which was described by the prophet Jeremias. "Many pastors have destroyed My vineyard; they have trodden My portion underfoot, they have changed My delightful portion into a desolate wilderness. They have laid it waste . . . with desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart." (Jer. xii. 11, 12.) In order to avoid this misfortune, we should think often of the evening.

Third Point.—When and in what manner will the work of the laborers be rewarded? "When evening was come." Evening is the end of our life. Ah, how rapidly it comes on! One hour more, perhaps, and all the time to work is at an end; nothing more to be done save to receive its reward. So great will be the recompense of the apostles, and the other evangelical laborers, that the others, says St. John Chrysostom, would be jealous, if it were possible for jealousy to enter the heart of the elect: *Per murmur significatur mercedis et gloriae magnitudo, quae tanta est in apostolis, ut caeteri electi et beati eis inviderent et murmurarent, si invidia et murmur in beatos cadere posset.* (Corn. Ib.)

What shall be the measure of this recompense, which shall be great, but yet proportioned to merit? It shall not be according to the duration of the work, for the laborers of the eleventh hour shall receive equal salary with those who shall have labored the whole day. This measure will be the grace of God, and co-operation therewith: *Majus meritum facit major, non labor, sed gratia, et gratiae co-operatio.* (Ib.) I deserve more, by doing work of less importance, if I perform them with greater love. *Disce hic praxim facilem augendi merita et gloriam, esse, si quis crebro exerceat actus charitatis, eosque ardentes et intensos.* (Ibid.)

Hence the conclusion of the parable, "so shall the last be first, and the first last." We have here a powerful motive to stimulate those who are to make up for lost time; an instant of fervor can compensate for inveterate lukewarmness: *Subitus calor longum vincit teporem.* (St. Hier, Ep. 34, ad Juli.) This teaches us ever to remain humble, and not to despise any person; this penitent is perhaps more fervent than I am; the great sinner may be converted and become a great saint, as I may perhaps go astray and become a great reprobate, "for many are called, and few are chosen."

Many are called to a state of perfection, few are they who respond to this call; many are called to lead a life of penitence, few are they who follow it, at least perseveringly; many are called to the practise of meditation and contemplation, but few are they who care to enter and advance in these holy ways; many are called to go to heaven, but few reach that destination, because they either neglect or refuse to employ the means which would lead them thither.

O my God, I discover within me resolutions, holy desires, inspirations of Thy grace; but when are these works really good which shall secure my salvation? (2 Pet. i. 10.) Be thou blessed for the mercy wherewith Thou callest me again when the day is about ending. Henceforth I will not lose a moment. Very soon, on the altar, holding Jesus in my hand, I shall say to Thee, as now already I say, *Per ipsum, cum ipso et in ipso:* "Through this well-beloved Son of Thine, with Him and in Him, receive Thy unworthy servant; grant that henceforth my life may be wholly absorbed in Thee." May I honor the sacrifice of Jesus in the works of the ministry, in the tears of repentance, of gratitude and of love.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—All men are called to cultivate the vineyard of their soul. God is the householder. He wishes us to apply to His service our memory and our will. Our soul is the Lord's vineyard; He has planted it and He cares for it. The day's work represents life; the day's hire shall be life everlasting. O my God, great are the benefits Thou hast hitherto bestowed upon my soul. Have they brought forth the fruits of holiness Thou hast a right to expect?

Second Point.—To the culture of their soul the priest should add the saving of other souls. They know how dearly God loves this mystical vineyard. Of this love we have the evidence in the Incarnation and the mysteries of Jesus Christ's life on earth. How glorious to be employed in the sanctification of the Church! In accepting the honor attached to this admirable vocation, I must accept the labor. For the encouragement of this purpose, I will often think on the end of the day's work.

Third Point.—When and in what manner shall the laborer be rewarded? The evening is the end of life! One hour more, perhaps, and my salary will be given to me. For the good priest, this reward will be so great that the other elect would be jealous, if jealousy were possible in heaven. It shall be measured more according to perfection than duration. Here is a powerful incen-

tive for those who have to make up for lost time. It is also a warning. The new penitent, just beginning his life of atonement, is perhaps far more advanced in grace than I.

Sexagesima Sunday.

MEDITATION XXXII.

THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD.

1.—*The Good Thought is a Seed which Jesus Christ Sows in our Souls.*

2.—*The Word of God is a Seed which, through us, He Sows in the Souls of our Brethren.*

3.—*Why does this Two-fold Seed, so Fruitful in Itself, Remain Unfruitful?*

First Point.—The good thought is a seed which the Saviour sows in our souls. God speaks to men in many different ways. The inspiration or good thought is one of the ordinary ways of communication between God and man. All the designs of Our Saviour may be reduced to three: To make saints on earth; to bring souls to heaven; to procure the glory of God through the virtues of the former and the happiness of the latter. To execute this plan He uses a good thought, which is an interior word, a divine seed, containing the germ of all the blessings which His love has destined for us in time and in eternity.

The first object of the Son of God in coming into this world was to restore the glory of God, and to institute the true worship of His majesty. For this object He inspires us with good thoughts. It is this that enables us to know, to love, and serve God, and establish His reign in our hearts. I can neither know nor love God if He does not reveal Himself to my intellect and to my heart. When He wishes me to glorify His infinite wisdom, He opens to my mind the secrets of His providence, the great designs He has concerning me, the admirable means by which He governs me.

When He wishes that I should fear His justice, He unveils for me the evil and malice of sin, places under my eyes, as He did for the woman of Samaria, the crimes which I committed, and at this sight I acknowledge that I deserve His chastisements.

The same should be said of the other two ends of His Incarnation, which were to sanctify men on earth and to bring souls to

heaven. For this purpose He chiefly employs good thoughts. To this interior word, which is heard in the sanctuary of the soul, we must apply what St. Ambrose says of the word of God in general: *Mundat, illuminat, accendit audientes.* It converts and purifies sinners by inspiring them with the hatred of sin. "The law of God is unspotted, converting souls." (Ps. xviii.) It enlightens the just and directs them in the way of precepts and of counsels. "Thy word is a lamp to my feet." (Ps. cxviii. 105.) It enlightens the perfect and unites them intimately to God. "Thy word is exceedingly refined." (Ib. 140.) Such is the sanctification of man, the secret of his predestination. Final perseverance which completes the work of salvation comes from divine grace, which rewards a good life by a good death; but whence comes a good life if not from good works? And good works originate in good desires, which themselves have no other source but the good thoughts of the mind. A good thought is, therefore, the spring of all merits, the root of all the virtues which make us friends of God, the principle of all our sanctity. Art thou fully convinced, O my soul, that without it there would be no perfect faith among the faithful, no purity for the virgins, no charity among the just? A good thought or inspiration filled the desert with penitents, the dungeons with martyrs, the Church of God with saints on earth, and the kingdom of heaven with innumerable elect. If such is thy belief, why dost thou receive it so coldly when Jesus Christ suggests it to thee? How is it that thou hast so little fear of stifling it among so many vain and useless thoughts? Knowest thou not that from either the good or bad use thou wilt make of this inspiration may depend an eternity of delights or an eternity of torments?

Second Point.—The word of God is a seed which Jesus Christ sows in the souls of others through our ministry. Every time we instruct, whatever may be the mode of instruction, it is always the Saviour sowing the field of His Church. "The sower went out to sow his seed." Every word of this Gospel is to be considered. The sower "went out," Jesus came forth from the bosom of His Father. "He came into the world to give testimony to the truth." (John, xvi.) His mission was to preach. "He sent Me to preach the Gospel to the poor." (Luke, iv. 18.) He is pre-eminently the "sower:" *Satorem istum nullum melius quam Filium Dei intelligere possumus, qui de sinu Patris . . . egrediens, ad hoc venit, ut testimonium perhiberet veritati.* (Bed. Comm. in Luc.) However, though He comes from the Father in order to draw nearer unto us, He says no other words than those which He heard of Him. (John, xv. 15.) He is ever in the Father, and the Father ever in Him. (John, xiv. 11.) Here we have an important lesson.

Preachers should "come forth" from God; not simply be sent by Him, but they should not speak to men except after conversing with God. They should live in constant, intimate union with Him. "He who sows," not he who sowed, or they who sow. What He Himself did during three years He now does through His ministers. It is He also who preaches, as it is He who baptizes: *In discipulo magister auditur.* (Bed. Ib.) Your glory, O Priest of God, consists in being employed by Him as His organ; your duty is to show yourself worthy of so great an honor. The time to fulfill the admirable ministry of preaching the Word of God is drawing near; prepare yourself to faithfully co-operate with the zeal of the Saviour. "To sow His seed." It is His own word which Jesus sows; He borrows it from none else, He himself being the Word of the living God: *Non accipit verbum quasi mutuatum, cum ipse naturaliter sit Verbum Dei.* (Cat. aur.) From Him and in Him we should receive it through meditation and the study of the Holy Scriptures. Let us never ascend the pulpit without praying Him to bless His word in our mouth, and let us disregard worldly considerations in the discharge of so divine a duty.

The Saviour in this parable warns his priests against two temptations, viz: Discouragement when they fail; vanity when they succeed. When our labors are apparently fruitless, we are tempted to say: "I am losing my time, they profit so little by my exhortations!" But you are not losing your time. You are preparing for God a full justification against the day of His judgment. Does Jesus Christ cease to sow the seed of His holy word though He foresees that more than the half of it will yield no fruit owing to the bad soil upon which it falls? *Discipulos erudit, ut, etsi plures audientium fuerint, qui pereant, non propter hoc Dominus, qui omnia praevidit, destitit a seminando.* (St. Chrys. Hom. 45 in Mat.) If, on the contrary, our instructions produce fruit, why should we glory? Let us thank Him who had prepared hearts and caused the divine seed to spring up.

Third Point.—How is it that a seed so fruitful brings forth no fruit in our souls and in the souls of our brethren? The word of God, either interior or exterior, has as much power to sanctify us as it had to create the world out of nothing; but of those who hear and those who announce it, it demands dispositions which are too often wanting.

I. Three things, say St. Thomas, are necessary for him who hears the word of God. He should preserve it in his memory, allow it to penetrate into his heart, and direct his will so as to follow its impulse: *Haec tria requiruntur: memoria, amor, sollicitudo.* Now this is what is wanting to us: *Haec tria per tria tollun-*

tur: memoria per vanitatem, amor per duritiam, sollicitudo per germinationem vitiorum. (St. Th. Expos. in Mat.) Our soul is like unto a highway, open to all travelers; truth is expelled by vanity, good thoughts by frivolity. Hardly has the holy seed fallen upon it than the devil destroys it, for this soul is like unto stony ground. Virtue can not take root in it; though some passing sentiments of devotion appear on the surface occasionally, the heart remains hardened. Or it may be thorny ground in which vices stifle the growth of virtues; the cares of time cause the "one only thing necessary" to be forgotten, though the Master said: "Seek first the kingdom of God." O Jesus, give me a calm, recollected mind retaining Thy word, an attentive soul considering the same, and free from every passion which might prevent its full fruition.

II. As to the word which we announce, we know its power from the epistle of this day telling us at what price St. Paul purchased the success of his apostolate: "In many more labors, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in death often Of the Jews, five times did I receive forty stripes less one." Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck. "In labors and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." (2 Cor. xi.) Have compassion on Thy ministers, O Lord, through the compassion Thou hast on so many unfortunate souls which only have need of holy priests to put an end to their wanderings, to return to Thee and be saved.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—A good thought is a seed which the Saviour sows in our souls. The designs of Jesus Christ are three: To glorify God, to sanctify souls on earth, to prepare the elect for heaven. To accomplish these ends, He employs good thoughts. I can not glorify God by knowing and loving Him unless He reveals Himself to my intellect and to my heart. He does this through good thoughts, which manifest to me His greatness, His power, His holiness, all His infinite perfections. The same should be said of the other ends of the Incarnation, which are to sanctify men on earth, and guarantee their happiness in heaven. A good thought converts sinners, enlightens and directs the just, confirms the perfect. On one good thought, according to the use I make of it, may depend my eternal lot. In vain does Jesus speak to thee, poor Samaritan, if thou wilt not listen and follow the light He imparts to thee.

Second Point.—The word of God is a seed which the Saviour sows through us in the souls of our brethren. It is Jesus Christ, however, who sows the field of His Church. "The sower went out to sow his seed." Every one of these words is to be considered. Jesus came forth from the bosom of His Father. His mission was to preach. He is ever, nevertheless, in the bosom of His Father. The preacher must come from God, and yet abide in God. It is God's word which we announce and which He proclaims through our organ. You must never give way to discouragement if the divine seed appears fruitless; neither should you yield to vanity if it bear abundant fruit.

Third Point.—How is it that a seed, so fruitful of itself, remains fruitless in our souls and in that of our brethren? Three things are necessary to him who receives this divine seed; he should keep it in his memory, it should penetrate into his heart, he should submit his will to its dictates. We know not how to keep our good thoughts; we lose them through frivolity of mind. On account of the hardness of our hearts truth does not sink deep; if it produce some light impressions, our will refuses to take energetic resolutions. The word of God meets with the same obstacles in those who announce it.

Quinquagesima Sunday.

MEDITATION XXXIII.

CONDUCT OF THE GOOD PRIEST DURING THE DAYS WHICH PRECEDE THE OPENING OF THE LENTEN FAST.

1.—*He Makes them Days of Recollection, of Prayer and Penance to Himself.*

2.—*He Displays during them Greater Zeal for the Glory of God and the Salvation of Souls.*

First Point.—Days of recollection, of prayer and penance. For the men of the world these are, as always, days of dissipation, of revolt against God. Jesus in the Gospel of to-day speaks of the reproaches and sufferings He will soon undergo in Jerusalem. "Behold we go up to Jerusalem." He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, mocked, scourged, spit upon, and put to death. The good Master announces this event to His disciples.

A good priest in these days shuns everything that savors of

worldly life. Not only does he abstain from the pleasures of the table, but he lives in retirement as far as he can, that he may more assiduously pay court to the divine King. "Lo, I have gone far off, flying away, and I abode in the wilderness; for I have seen iniquities and contradictions in the city." (Ps. liv. 8, 10.) His sentiments are those of St. Augustine, who said: *Bibant alii mortiferas voluptates; portio calicis mei Dominus est.* He does penance, he prays for the unfortunate persons who provoke the anger of the Lord. "Howl, ye shepherds, and cry." (Jer. xxv. 34.) "O ye Priests. Howl, ye ministers of the altar." (Joel, i. 13.)

Second Point.—He displays greater zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. We are the friends of Jesus. This is the name He deigns to give us. "I have called you friends." We do not deserve the title if we have no zeal for His honor. "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me." (Ps. lxviii. 10.) Friendship unites hearts. Let us, as often as we can, kneel at the foot of the altar, and console our adorable Friend. Did He, perchance, see any of His ministers among the ungrateful souls present to His mind when He said: "My heart has expected reproach and misery, and I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none"? (Ib. 21.) Were He to ask them to-day what He had asked His apostles, "Will you also go away?" is there one who would not answer with Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life"? (John, vi. 68, 69.) With the help of Thy grace, O Lord, we shall be with Thee constantly, participating in the bitter sorrows of Thy heart. "You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations, and I dispose to you as My Father has disposed to Me, a kingdom." (Luke, xxii. 28, 29.)

But the greatest consolation which His good priests can give Jesus is to hurry to the rescue of those who, in offending Him, rush on to damnation. The more sin abounds, the more does the man of God strengthen Himself to fight against it. Let us redouble our charity. Let us admonish, instruct, do everything in our power to excite the faithful to fervor, and to stem the torrent of evil. The Scriptures say of Josias: "In the days of sinners he strengthened godliness." (Ecclus. xlix. 4.) What did you do hitherto, what will you do hereafter to deserve this praise?

In preparing for Mass, offer amends to Our Lord Jesus Christ for all the sin He beholds from His throne. Unite yourself to the pious souls which frequently visit Him during the Forty Hours, offer Him all the sentiments of adoration, of gratitude, of tender and generous love which his presence in the Eucharist inspired in the saints.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Days of recollection, of penance and prayer. A good priest shuns carefully whatever might savor of a worldly life: *Bibant alii mortiferas voluptates; portio calicis mei Dominus est.* He does penance for the many unfortunate sinners who provoke the anger of God.

Second Point.—He is zealous to procure the glory of God and the salvation of souls. The priest is the friend of God. He should feel keenly the outrages offered to Him. "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me." The greatest consolation he can give Our Saviour is the rescue of those who are being lost. He redoubles his zeal. He neglects nothing in striving to excite the fervor of the faithful.

Monday after Quinquagesima.

MEDITATION XXXIV.

THE SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST.

When one meditates deeply upon this mystery, applying thereto his mind and heart, he finds in this meditation the beginning and consummation of true happiness, viz.:

1.—*The Fear which Keeps us from Sin.*
2.—*The Love which Unites us to God.*

First Point.—Meditation on the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ imparts to us the fear which keeps us from sin.

I. In the Victim offered my faith reveals to me, under the appearances of a slave, a God of infinite majesty. Jesus is the "splendor of the eternal light." God the Father acknowledged him to be His "well-beloved Son"; the heavens, the earth, the angels, the devils, the very rocks reddened with His blood, His executioners render testimony to His divinity. But, exclaims St. Bernard, can it be that He is in reality Almighty God? Is this man who expires on an infamous gibbet the Master of life, the Lord of the universe? *Ergone credendum est quod iste sit Deus, qui flagellatur, qui conspuitur, qui crucifigitur?* Thou dost believe it, O my soul, and thou dost adore this crucified God. The blows of God offended by sin fall upon One who is God, and this penitent

God bears the resemblance of sin. Thy prophet, O Lord, rightly exclaimed: "Who knoweth the power of Thy anger?" (Ps. lxxxix. 11.) And St. Paul presents to us Thy cross as the great manifestation of Thy justice. "Whom God has proposed to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to the showing of His justice." (Rom. iii. 25.) Who shall be spared if Thy Son can not be spared? When I behold Thee dying on Calvary, methinks I hear Thee saying through all Thy wounds, as through so many mouths: "O you blind men, you know not whom you ought to fear. I shall teach you. I will show you whom you shall fear; fear Him who lifted His mighty arm against His only and well-beloved Son, and would not be appeased save by My blood." "Yea, I say to you, fear Him." This I say to all; I say it to you, My apostles and friends.

11. What are the sufferings of this Lamb of God, who is sanctity itself? Hear Him foretell the reproaches and torments which are in store for Him. "He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and scourged and spit upon; they will put Him to death." (Luke, xviii.) Behold a summary of His Passion. He shall be delivered. By one of His disciples He is delivered into the hands of His enemies; by the Jews He is delivered to Pilate, by Pilate to the executioners; by His Father and by Himself He is given up to all sorts of outrages and sufferings. "He gave Himself up for me." Interiorly He suffers mortal sorrow, cruel agony, rejection by God and man. Exteriorly He is despoiled of all; they cast lots for His garments, He is insulted and mocked. He is not a man, He is the reproach of men. Consider His body. "From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness in Him."

That divine body is nothing but wounds, bruises, and angry sores. (Ib.) His head is crowned with thorns, His face bruised and covered with spittle, His eyes filled with blood and tears, His arms bound with cords, His hands and feet pierced with nails. O Man of sorrow, in this wise it is that Thy Father punishes in Thee sins which Thou couldst not have committed. What chastisement does he deserve who has committed them? What shall become of sinners when Jesus Christ, their Judge, will compare their so-called penance with that which He performed for them in His Passion? O sacred cross, thou art my hope now; be not my reproach at that hour. Let those who have been Thy enemies tremble in the day of affliction; but I will profit by Thy grace, and shall find in Thee my salvation and my rest. "Be not Thou a terror unto me, Thou art my hope on the day of affliction. . . . let them be afraid and let not me be afraid." (Jer. xvii. 17, 18.)

Second Point.—The sufferings and death of Jesus Christ suggest more love than fear. St. Bernard, wholly absorbed in the contemplation of this mystery, cried out in tears: *Quis haec omnia fecit? Amor.* It was the love of God toward men which was the mainspring of that drama, at the same time so appalling and so consoling. Love conceived the thought, God executed the plan. God did all that I see in the Garden of Olives, in the palace of Herod, in the pretorium, on Calvary. And what other end did so loving a God propose to Himself, but to be beloved by us, and thereby to sanctify and to save us? Where, indeed, is the man, says that holy Doctor, who would not be moved, though his heart was as hard as stone, by the consideration of this mystery: *Cujus vel saxeum pectus tanta et talis a tali et tanto collata mulititudo beneficiorum non emolliat?* We remember Him who was made a curse for us, that He might redeem us from the curse of the law. (Gal. iii.) Who laid down His life to give for us eternal life; how could we but exclaim with St. Paul: "The charity of Christ urges us?" Shall we not subscribe to the anathema He pronounces against a soul which is ungrateful enough to resist the charms of a goodness so touching and generous? "If any man love not Our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) How can we but answer, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee," to a Saviour who says to me: *Intellige, fili; dilexi te, et tradidi memetipsum pro te; me creatorem pro te creatura, me patrem pro te prodigo filio, me Deum pro te homuncione, me offensum pro te offendente, me benefactorem pro te ingrato, me summe beatum pro te miserrimo?* (Mem. vit. sac. c. 19.) Let us, therefore, with all our heart, with all our soul, love Him who deigned to suffer for us: *Clamant vulnera, et super omnia clamat amor, ut toto corde totisque visceribus diligatur, qui pro dilectione tanta et talia perferre dignatus est.*

Cross of my Saviour, blood of my God, while you teach me how great was His love for me, you reproach me with the weakness of my love for Him. Make sure Thy conquest, O my crucified Saviour! Secure for Thyself a heart ready to escape at the very time it protests that it will cling to Thee irrevocably. Grant that the consideration of Thy sufferings may inspire me with the fear of committing sin, which is the sovereign evil, and the love which unites me to Thee, who art the sovereign good. May I fear Thee, may I love Thee, but let my love be stronger in me than fear. I will fear Thee only in loving Thee, and in order to love Thee forever. In this wise I shall find, in Thy cross, all that is useful and necessary for my sanctification: *Qui se intente et devote in sanctissima Passione Domini exercet, omnia utilia et necessaria sibi abundanter ibi invenit.* (St. Bon.) *Nihil tam salutiferum est quam*

quotidie cogitare quanta pro nobis pertulit Deus homo. (St. Aug.) *Haec meditare dixi sapientiam; in his justitiae mihi perfectionem constitui; haec mea sublimior philosophia, scire Jesum, et hunc crucifixum.* (St. Bern., ser. 43 in Cant.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Meditation on the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ imparts to us the fear which preserves us from committing sin, because we see how severely God punishes it. I. Who is He who suffers? Under the form of a slave I discover in Him the supreme majesty. Is He who expires on an infamous gibbet really the Master of life? Thou believest it, O my soul, and thou adorest this God crucified. The mighty blows of God offended by sin do then fall upon one who is God. Who shall be spared if the Son of God be not? II. What are the sufferings of this Lamb of God, who is sanctity itself? Interiorly, mortal sorrow, rejection by God and man. Exteriorly, naught but wounds, bruises, sores. His head, His face, His eyes, His arms, His hands, His feet, all in Him suffers pain. O Jesus, how shall it be with me when Thou shalt contrast my small penance with the rigor of the penance Thou didst perform for me?

Second Point.—The sufferings and death of Jesus Christ suggest to us more love than fear. The love of God for us was the great spring of that drama, at once so appalling and consoling. Should we not exclaim with St. Paul: "The charity of Jesus Christ urges us"? Shall we not cry out with him: "If any man love not Our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema"?

Tuesday after Quinquagesima.

MEDITATION XXXV.

CURE OF THE BLIND MAN OF JERICHO—CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons Concerned.*
2.—*Hear their Words.*
3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—Jesus while on His way to Jerusalem foretold His Passion to His disciples: "Now it came to pass that when He drew near to Jericho (which city He should pass to go to Jeru

salem), that a certain blind man sat by the way begging. And when He heard the multitude passing by, he asked what this meant, and they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by; and he cried out saying: Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And they that went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out much more: Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus standing, commanded him to be brought unto Him. And when he was near, He asked Him, saying: What wilt thou that I do to thee? But he said, Lord that I may see. And Jesus said to him: Receive thy sight, thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed Him, glorifying God." (Luke, xviii.)

Second Prelude.—O my God, cure Thou my blindness, and grant that I may cure that of my brethren.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. Jesus Christ, occupied with the thought of His Passion, loved to speak of it. He is about to undergo this Passion for the salvation of men. Why are they not better disposed to make use of His sufferings and His death! His heart is continually thinking of bestowing some new favor upon men. The apostles, who understood nothing of the mystery of the cross which their Master had just revealed to them, are planning preferments, forming projects of ambition—even the moment after He had informed them of the reproaches He would suffer to atone for human pride. Oh, how difficult it is to understand any truth which is contrary to prejudices or passions! The large crowd which presses around Jesus, eager for new developments, desirous to witness some miracle. An unfortunate blind man sitting by the wayside, depending upon public charity for existence: "He sat by the wayside begging." How sad his condition! Yet he was alive to his deplorable situation and was anxious for a cure. Much more to be pitied are so many sinners plunged in darkness delighting in creature gratifications, which degrade them and which will only increase their future sufferings! How much more deplorable is the state of a tepid priest to whom are addressed the words of the Saviour: "Thou sayest I am rich. . . . and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Ap. iii. 17.)

Second and Third Points.—Hear the words and consider the actions. When the blind man hears the multitude passing by, he learns that Jesus is traveling on the road. "They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by." With this news a ray of hope enters his soul. He had heard of Jesus, of His power, of His goodness, of His tender compassion for unfortunates. He knew that He had cured other blind men, even one of those who had been

born blind. He consequently cries out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." The passers-by bid him to be silent, but he cries out still louder. Here indeed an occasion of relief was soon to pass away. Would it ever return? When shall I, O my God, cry out to Thee with that ardor which increases in proportion to the difficulties which it has to overcome? I know full well that Thou lovest importunity in prayer.

"Jesus stood." An humble, confident prayer causes the Almighty to stand, to lay down His arms, to open His heart to us. O blind and worldly men, will you not also address your requests to Jesus Christ? Know you not how great are His power and His willingness to do good? Hear you not the sound of that pious multitude which goes to adore Him in His temples? Ask, and they shall answer you: It is the Saviour passing by. These are days of grace, favorable moments which will soon pass. It is God who offers you pardon, peace, eternal felicity.

Jesus commands the blind man to be brought to Him. They say to him: Arise, He calls you. Filled with joy and hope, he goes through the crowd, he is in the presence of the supreme Consoler. "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" O Son of God, dost Thou permit this poor forsaken blind man to make use of Thy power as he chooses? Such is My determination. I will grant him his desire. What will he ask? What would you have asked in his place? Of what use all the goods of earth, if he had remained blind? "O Lord, that I may see." Be convinced of this, O thou my soul. Everything is in that prayer. The intelligence of divine truths prepares the soul for all graces, produces all virtues. Let us banish error from the mind, and the heart shall be healed of its passions. "Receive thy sight," Our Lord replies, "thy faith has made thee whole," and instantly the blind man saw. Filled with joy, he praises the Lord, and follows the Son of God. I see it, O Jesus! In order to be filled with Thy gifts, it suffices to approach Thee, and to pray to Thee with confidence. Shall I languish any longer in my spiritual infirmities, when I am in possession of this means of relief? Refuse not to grant me the faith based on firm confidence, perseverance, humility, to which Thou hast attached salvation. Grant that I may see my nothingness, and Thy greatness, O light which art life: "Give me understanding, and I shall live." (Ps. cxviii. 144.) Ah! there are in our days many blind people to be cured. Thou willest me to have compassion on them, and so to be the instrument of Thy mercies. Thou sayest to me: *Respice.* Look around you, see many of My disciples deserting My standard to enroll themselves under that of Satan; see hell triumphant, and the angels of peace shedding bitter

tears; consider those unfortunate men who are your brethren rejoicing over things which will mean their supreme misfortune. What bitter regrets, what dreadful despair they are preparing for themselves! Will you not enlighten them? For the sake of their souls, be faithful to the inspirations of my grace, and I shall bless your zeal.

Speak thus with Our Saviour. Take some special resolution; often repeat to-day, both for yourself and for other sinners: "Jesus, Son of David, and Son of God, have mercy on us!" or, if you prefer it, "My Jesus, mercy!"

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point. — Contemplate the persons concerned. Jesus occupied with the thought of His Passion, loving to speak of it. He thinks of conferring some new blessing on men. The apostles, who understand nothing about the mysteries of the cross, occupying their minds with projects of ambition. The crowd which presses around the Saviour eager for something new. An unfortunate blind man sitting by the wayside. He was sensible of his situation. Much more should we pity so many blind, unfortunate sinners who live content.

Second and Third Points.—Hear the words and consider the actions. When the blind man hears the crowd advancing along the road, he learns that Jesus is passing by. His heart opens and he cries out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus passing by is an occasion of salvation which shall soon have disappeared. Consider the marvelous effect of prayer—it causes the Almighty to pause! Jesus commands the blind man to be brought to Him. The Son of God places at his disposal all His power. "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" What will he ask? For a man that is blind, is there anything that can compare with sight? "O Lord, that I may see!" His prayer is heard. O Jesus, when shall mine also be granted? "O God, give me understanding and I shall live."

Ash Wednesday.

MEDITATION XXXVI.

THE LENT OF A GOOD PASTOR.

1.—*His Particular Duties during this Time.*
2.—*Motives why he should Faithfully Accomplish Them.*

First Point.—Duties of a priest, and particularly of a pastor, during Lent. Some of these relate to his own sanctification; others to the sanctification of his flock.

I. The intention of the Church in the institution of this holy season has been to make it a time of amendment, consecrated to recollection and prayer, to penance and good works. She has intended in this way to honor the solitude and the long fast of Jesus Christ, and to prepare us for Easter—that is, for the passage from death to life, or from an imperfect to a more holy life, as Jesus prepared Himself, by fasting and retirement from the world, to renew the world through the preaching of the Gospel. Now the Church requires much more from her ministers than from her other children.

A good priest adapts himself to those views of the Church, follows as closely as he can the footsteps of the Saviour, and enters with Him into a more retired and silent life. Heavenly inspirations do not come with light amusements and frivolous conversations. Consequently, the priest eschews all unnecessary and worldly concerns.

The further he separates himself from things of earth, the closer his union with God. He prays with Jesus Christ praying for us in the desert, and, like his Saviour, unites fasting to prayer. He must edify his people, and his success in preaching penance will be in proportion to the mortifications his strength will allow him to practise.

After descending from the mountain where He had spent forty days without eating or drinking, with no other society but that of the beasts, with no other bed but the rock of the mountains, Jesus will be entitled to begin the course of His instructions by the words: "Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand." (Matt. iv. 47.) Great is the authority of good example. Has it been lacking hitherto in my instructions? The God-man had no need to pray, and the Holy of holies had no need to do penance. It was for us, said He to His Father, that He sanctified Himself. A

pastor should endeavor to grow in holiness, both for himself and for his flock.

II. The season of Lent is, for the priest, the time of unusual work. At this time chiefly he is all activity, and at this time he meets with most consoling results. During these days of grace, a good pastor is continually engaged either in praying to God to forgive His people, or in visiting them to bring them back, or to make them advance in virtue.

"In the time of wrath he was made a reconciliation." (Ecclus. xliv. 17.) This duty, laid already upon the priests of the Old Law, is for us of a far stricter obligation. The Church reminds us of it to-day, by directing us to read the words of the prophet Joel. "Between the porch and the altar, the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep and shall say: Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people, and give not Thy inheritance to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them." This obligation was thus understood by the holy men who had charge of souls. Samuel shed so many tears over the sin of Saul, that the Lord had to command him to cease mourning for him. "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul?" (1 Kings, xvi. 1.) We know the lamentations of Moses, of Jeremias, of Isaias over the obstinacy of the Hebrews; the laments of St. Paul and of Jesus Christ over the blindness and obduracy of the same people. Weep, O good Priests, ministers of reconciliation, after the example of all good pastors, and of the chief of all pastors. Angels of peace, weep bitterly over the loss of souls; weep over your flock, in the midst of which iniquity abounds, faith is becoming extinct, scandals are multiplying. But while your prayers, your penances and tears ascend to God to appease His anger, do you also speak to your brethren to enlighten, to convert, to save them?

Speak in the pulpit, in instructions, in administering the sacraments. Speak in public and in private. Lent is pre-eminently the time for announcing the word of God in every salutary manner. It suffices not to explain one dogma, or one point of the moral code; give your people a regular course of instructions. Lay its plan, prepare its matter with the greatest of care. Forget not that you should create love for the word of God, and as a consequence you must interest your audience if you seek its betterment. Seriously consider those grave obligations. Examine in what respect you have failed in them. Make the resolution to observe them more faithfully hereafter.

Second Point.—Motives for a pastor to spend the Lent in a holy manner.

I. He has sins to expiate, he has a soul to save, and this he

can not do unless he will work with earnestness for the salvation of his people; he is obliged to do penance, and feels repugnance for it; but he is, as it were, impelled to undertake and to persevere in it constantly, in these days which God has laid apart for this purpose: *Advenerunt nobis dies poenitentiae.* The offices of the Church, the wants of his flock, the penance which he teaches fail not to edify him and induce him to do penance.

II. He sees that in this fidelity to the graces of this holy season, he will be enabled to amass a rich treasure of merits. What a harvest he will be able to gather through the labors he will undertake, the works of mercy he will continually perform! Will he not remember the admonition contained in the Gospel of this day: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven"?

III. No other season of the year promises him better results. The minds of the people are prepared. The remembrance of the past, the examples they witness touch the hearts of many who have hitherto been under the control of a mortal apathy; and as to God, He is more inclined to clemency. Hear the language full of tenderness which He directs us to apply to sinners: "Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, because He is bountiful to forgive." (Is. lv. 8.) "Or will God forget to show mercy, or will He in His anger shut up His mercies?" (Ps. lxxvi. 10.) Here is a strange contrast: man can not restrain his anger, God can not shut up His mercies. He allows mercies to overflow from His heart, particularly during this universal fast, when so many pure souls mortify themselves to appease Him. Special graces are attached to the anniversary days of our Redemption. "When we approach the time in which the Church celebrates the memory of the Passion, we must feel assured that heaven pours down copiously the blood of the adorable Victim which was slain on Calvary, provided we put no obstacle thereto." (Nouet.)

In commencing this sacred season, O you pastors, contemplate its end. How would you then like to have kept this holy time? How pleased you will be, if, at the end of Lent, you may say to yourself: "During this Lent I gave light to many who were blind; I purified lepers, healed some that were sick, raised others that were dead; I brought back stray sheep to the fold." How joyfully will you give the body and blood of Jesus Christ to those new guests whom you yourself shall have prepared for the sacred banquet? And what if God refuse consolations in time to the efforts of your zeal? This privation shall certainly turn to the increase of your everlasting reward.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The time of Lent imposes special obligations on priests, and particularly on pastors. Some of these relate to their own sanctification, others to the sanctification of their flocks. Of her ministers also the Church requires recollection, penance, and good works as a preparation for Easter. A good priest forbids himself all unnecessary intercourse with the world. He prays with Jesus, and after His example, he joins fasting to prayer. He walks in the footsteps of his Master: *Pro eis sanctifico meipsum.* Lent is the time of great work for a zealous priest. A good pastor, during these days, ceases not to turn to God to appease His anger, and to speak to His people to bring them back to God, and induce them to advance in virtue.

Second Point.—Motives which determine a good pastor to spend Lent in a holy manner. I. He has a soul to save, and in this work he will not succeed unless he labors fervently to sanctify his people. He must do penance for himself and for the souls confided to his care. II. In his fidelity to the graces of Lent, he sees a powerful means of amassing a rich treasure of merits. "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." No other season of the year promises so certain a spiritual success. The hearts of the faithful are better prepared. Almighty God is more inclined to clemency. Particular graces are attached to the days on which we commemorate our Redemption. He will gather up at Easter what he shall have sowed during Lent.

First Sunday of Lent.

MEDITATION XXXVII.

JESUS CHRIST TEMPTED IN THE DESERT.

1.—*No One so Exposed to Temptation as Priests and Pastors.*
2.—*They should not Expose Themselves to Temptation.*
3.—*If They are Faithful They need not Fear Temptation.*

First Point.—Priests are more exposed than others to temptation. This results necessarily from their vocation and their duties. It enters into the designs of Providence that all men should be tempted. But if it be said to all: "Son, when thou

comest to the service of God. . . . prepare thy soul for temptation." (Ecclus. ii. 1.) How much more should he expect to be tempted who not only devotes himself to the service of God, but to gain Him other servants? In the same measure that the enemy of souls sighs after their eternal loss, he furiously attacks him who endeavors to snatch them out of his hands. The army of Jesus Christ is made up of priests who continue the warfare which He Himself inaugurated against the powers of hell, and is it surprising that hell should assault them with greater fury? Satan, moreover, knows well the advantage he draws from the fall of a priest for the success of his projects. The whole of the army of Christ is, as it were, wounded in its chief, all the sheep in the person of their pastor: *Antiquus hostis caput potius quam membra, duces exercitus potius quam militum turmam, et pastores libentius quam ovium greges oppugnare conatur.* (St. Laur. Just., de Reg. Prael.)

Our daily occupations act as a help to our enemy. Some of these bring us into contact with the corruption of the world and all its vices. Great is the facility they afford the spirit of darkness to wake in us passions which are hardly extinct, or at least to annoy us by troublesome recollections. Other duties attract esteem, respect, and consideration, and the proud Lucifer avails himself of these to tempt us to commit the sin which caused his ruin. If we busy ourselves with exterior matters, we are tempted with dissipation of mind, the losing sight of God's presence with love of the world. Solitude and retirement have also their dangers. Whence every priest should say with St. Bernard: *Undique bella mihi video, undique tela volant, undique tentamenta, undique pericula; quocumque me vertam, nulla securitas est.* We must, therefore, expect to be tempted. Attacks which we foresee are almost without danger: *Jacula minus feriunt quae praevidentur.* (St. Greg., Hom. 34.)

Second Point.—Priests should not expose themselves to temptation. The Holy Spirit whom the Saviour had visibly received on the banks of the Jordan soon led Him into the desert to be tempted. (Matt. iv. 1.) We received the same spirit in our ordination. If it be the Spirit of God and not our own, if it be charity, true zeal, a pure intention, which expose us to temptation, God will be with us in the struggle; but if we go imprudently to meet an enemy who has sworn to destroy us, we need not hope to be helped from above, for God will not encourage our rashness nor reward our presumption.

Of this we see a memorable example in the persons of St. Peter and St. Paul. Both go to Jerusalem, both expose themselves in

like circumstances. There was question for the one and the other to defend the interests of Jesus Christ in presence of His enemies. The one and the other must either deny or confess Him publicly. Both seemed to be in the same dispositions. Peter had declared more than once that he was ready to die. Paul said also as much: "I am ready, not only to be bound, but to die also in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts, xxi. 13.) Yet St. Peter succumbed and St. Paul triumphed. Whence came the different results? Peter sought the occasion. Why had he entered the hall of Caiaphas? Why did he mingle with the wicked world? St. Paul had not acted so; he had, indeed, showed himself in the assembly of the priests in the pretor's palace, but the Holy Ghost conducted him thither; he did nothing save by his inspiration: "Being bound in the spirit I go to Jerusalem." (Ib. xx. 22.) Had St. Peter acted according to the direction of His Master, God's grace would have prevented his fall. If Paul had unnecessarily exposed himself to temptation, he would not have overcome.

Third Point.—If he is faithful, a priest need not fear temptation. Let us strive against them promptly, constantly, using the weapons placed at our disposal by Our Saviour. First of all, let us banish any evil suggestions immediately, without deliberating, without temporizing with the enemy: *nolo sinas cogitationem crescere . . . dum parvus est hortis, interfice.* (St. Hier. Ep. 22 ad Eust.) To the stubbornness of attack, let us oppose constancy of resistance, and let us fear the temptations of Satan even after having overcome them. He has departed only for a time. (Luke, iv. 13.) Let us mistrust our passions, although they do not actually trouble us. During the time of peace our enemies are plotting. But since each victory has made us stronger, why should we succumb when victory has become easier?

Jesus has placed in our hands two invincible weapons, vigilance and prayer. All that is necessary is to wield them properly. Vigilance keeps the eye of the soul ever open to discover the danger and the tempter. The devil is not always the tempter. It is often what we love, what we fear, nay, at times, what we respect. Vigilance preserves in us that recollection by which we find our strength in faith: "Whom resist ye, strong in faith." (1 Pet. v. 9.) This was the weapon used by Jesus in banishing the devil. Ah, how great the light which enters the intellect, how powerful the energy imparted to the will by the solemn remembrance: *Scriptum est.* "It is written." Vigilance points out danger, induces resistance, but prayer obtains grace of victory. "He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him, I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him, and I will glorify him." (Ps. xc. 15.)

Prayer keeps us near the Almighty, vigilance near ourselves, and so we have no reason for fear; without His consent our enemy works more successfully for our advantage than for our ill; by increasing our struggles He multiplies our victories and our merits.

For the true servants of God, temptations are a great good. "My brethren, count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations . . . blessed is the man that endureth temptation." (Jam. i. 2, 12.) They enlighten us as to our nothingness, and convey the sense of our weakness. Humiliations tend to sever us from this life, where everything is full of dangers. They offer us the occasion of knowing the Almighty by having recourse to Him. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." (Ps. xlix. 15.) They purify, strengthen, and perfect our virtues. "Power is made perfect in infirmity." (2 Cor. xii. 9.) Far from demonstrating that God spurns us, they are often an earnest of His special love for us. "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptations should prove thee." (Tob. xii. 13.)

Go to the altar, nourish yourself with the bread of the strong: *Mens deficit, quam non recepta Eucharistia erigit et accendit.* (St. Cyp., Ep. 54, ad Cor.) The devil trembles when he sees our lips empurpled with the divine blood: *Hic Sanguis, cum digne suscipitur, daemones procul pellit.* (St. Chrys.) *Caro Christi nostrarum refrigerat aestum cupiditatum, et libidinis ignem extinguit.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— Priests are more exposed to temptation than others. In consequence of their vocation and of their occupations. All should fortify themselves against temptations when they desire to serve God; much more so when they intend to lead men to His service. To the extent to which the enemy of souls thirst after their eternal loss, he attacks with all his might those who struggle to save them. There are dangers connected with our occupations. The devil uses them to excite our passions. Temptations of pride, when we succeed. Temptations of discouragement when we fail. *Undique tela volant, undique tentamenta, undique pericula.*

Second Point.— Priests should not expose themselves to temptation. If, through real charity and zeal, and by the guidance of the Holy Ghost, I expose myself to temptation, God will be with me in the struggle. If I expose myself rashly to danger, I must not hope that He will encourage my rashness. Of this we have an example in the persons of St. Paul and of St. Peter.

Third Point.— The priest need not fear who is careful to avoid and to banish temptation. However, he should resist it promptly, and use the means which Jesus Christ has placed at his disposal. Let us not delay one moment: *Nolo sinas cogitationem crescere. . . . Dum parvus est hostis, interfice.* Watchfulness and prayer. Watchfulness enables us to discover danger from whatever quarter it may come. Prayer obtains for us power to baffle it. If we know how to take wise precautions, our enemy will work more successfully for our glory than for our woe.

MEDITATION XXXVIII.

EVANGELICAL LABORERS ARE PARTICULARLY EXPOSED TO THREE TEMPTATIONS, LIKE UNTO THOSE OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE DESERT.

1.—*Excessive Care of their Body and Health.*
2.—*Desire of Honors.*
3.—*Self-interest and Ambition.*

First Point.—Inordinate care of one's body and health. The devil, seeing the extreme hunger which Jesus Christ suffered after His long fast, advises Him to change stones into loaves of bread. If He be the Son of God, He has the right to perform miracles, and a miracle is a necessity in His present state of exhaustion. The enemy of souls attacks the priests in the same manner. He directs all their thoughts to the care of their health. They imagine themselves to be useful, perhaps necessary, for the glory of God, the service of the Church; they are doing good, they see before them a vast field; can they be too careful of their health? And on this ground they give up every practise of mortification. They secure, as far as possible, an easy and pleasant life, indulge in long sleeps and rich food, and if it happens that they are deprived of any comfort, or have to suffer any inconvenience, they give way to complaints.

Will enervation of this kind form a true apostle? Was this the example left us by Jesus Christ? As soon as He had received baptism, and the mission which His Father had given Him by proclaiming Him His Son and the object of His complacency, He withdrew into a desert, being led thither by the Spirit of God. How did He spend His time there? He prayed and fasted. He passed forty days without eating or drinking. If He took any rest it was on

the bare ground. Was not this telling us, that far from giving up penance when we embrace the life of an apostle, we should then, particularly, consider penance indispensable?

There are sinners for whom we ought to do penance if we will convert them, as there are demons who can not be cast out save by prayer and fasting. Prudence, it is true, should regulate the exercise of mortification, but if we be guided by the example of Jesus Christ one may go far without failing in prudence. Let us, at all events, be cautious, and not rely too much on ourselves; let us not follow the counsels of the spirit of darkness, who preaches discretion to induce us to lead a sensual life, but let us rather obey the spirit of truth, which guides us through our director. Let us give up this wisdom of the flesh, which is death, because it is an enemy of God, and because, by adopting its maxims, it is impossible to please God. (Rom. viii. 6, 7, 8.) Let us cast all our solicitude on Providence. Will God forget His priests, He who provides for the birds of the air, and for so many men who make no use of His blessings, except to offend Him? The less solicitous we are regarding our health, the more will the good Master be its guardian. Let us not forget that great mortification and great confidence in God are necessary dispositions to apostolic men.

Second Point. — Second Temptation. A desire of honors. Against this temptation one should be particularly on his guard in the beginning of the holy ministry. A newly ordained priest considers himself fit to discharge any duty. He takes upon him burdens much too weighty for his shoulders. Imagination soars high; and it frequently happens that conspicuous reverses are the punishment of this presumption. One may be called to minister to souls, and have neither grace nor calling to perform all the duties of the ministry. If your superiors demand of you no more than to teach catechism, do not attempt to preach; if they wish you to preach in a country church, do not long for large and cultivated audiences in cities. God speaks to you through their mouth. Be not deceived by false zeal. There will be no security, no hope of success for your labors except in the place wherein God wishes you to be, and in the exercise of those functions which He has destined for you.

Mistrust that eagerness to make a display of talents or zeal, perhaps in the wrong time and place; it is not the Holy Ghost, but rather the tempter who instigates this action. Jesus Christ had been sent to enlighten the world by His preaching; and yet He was led into the desert. There is a time for everything. He will come out of this solitude. He will begin to preach when the appointed day will have arrived, and neither the glory of God nor

the salvation of the world will lose anything by delay. Behold our Model! Let us continue in our obscure occupations; let us be satisfied in the discharge of duties wherein the practise of humility is united to the exercise of charity, viz., hearing the confession of the poor, instructing the children and the ignorant; the best of evangelical laborers began in this way, and preferred this work to all others in the ministry. If, later on, we be called to perform some work more important in the estimation of the world, we shall obey with so much the more willingness that we shall have learned to be diffident of ourselves, and to trust in God alone.

Third Point.—Thoughts of ambition and interest are a third temptation. We see both of them used by Satan is his last effort against the Son of God. After taking Him and setting Him upon the pinnacle of the Temple, so that He might be seen and admired by the multitude by performing a miracle, he took Him up into a high mountain, and unfolded before His eyes all that is most seductive in the world: "The kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." He shows to Him the grandeur and the glory of earth, not such as they are, but such as they appear to be, and promises to give them all to Him provided He will adore Him. "All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me." How many deceitful promises he makes even now, not to men of the world only, but also to the ministers of God. How many there are who suffer themselves to be dazzled when he places before their eyes the glory of those great dignities which the saints feared so much! They imagine that they will obtain great successes, that they will be sought after, applauded, spoken of, promoted to high positions. What may they not hope for from the friendship and favor of men of wealth and influence? And, alas, how often do they silence their conscience to gratify influential and wealthy friends!

If such thoughts come to our mind, let us humble ourselves without giving way to despondency, since the father of lies dared to make such suggestions to the Master of truth. Let us answer him with Jesus Christ: "It is written the Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve." (Matt. iv.) God alone! To adore any other would be degradation. Let us seek those honors which last forever, not those which vanish like a dream. Let us preserve our liberty, and, if possible, let us owe no man anything save love. Ambition leads to sad results: *Quam multis honor occasio exitii fuit.* (St. Aug.) The first consequence of ambition and cupidity is the debasement of the priestly character. The devil himself, as St. Irenæus remarks, confesses this truth, by using the expression, *Si cadens,* " if falling down." This would indeed be a descent—from the high rank of man of God to

the servant of Satan. It would be to bow down before him whom we should walk on! How dreadful the consequences to priests: *Omnium malorum radix cupiditas, ex qua sacrilegia simonia, et omnium fere malorum cohors, prodiit.* (Conv. Melod., an. 1879.)

Jesus Christ, triumphing over all the temptations of Satan, is served by angels, who are sent by His Father, and bring Him heavenly nourishment. God is wont to act in like manner toward His faithful ministers. Their disinterestedness and humility win them esteem; they never suffer want. Let us, then, have no ambition in this world, save that of serving God, of being poor like Jesus Christ, and to be poor for the sake of Him.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Excessive care of our body and health. This was the first temptation of Our Lord. Pretexts are not wanting. Mortifications might interfere with the usefulness of the ministry. Think of the fast of Jesus Christ. Penance indispensable to the apostle; confidence also. These are the most necessary dispositions for him.

Second Point.—Desire of honors. Let us be on our guard concerning this temptation. Jesus is sent to enlighten the world by His preaching, and yet He is led into the desert by the Spirit. He will begin when the time appointed will have come. Let us be satisfied to fulfil little duties, as it will be pleasing to God.

Third Point.—Thoughts of ambition and cupidity. Third temptation. These two temptations were used by Satan in his last assault against the Saviour. He often now also makes deceitful promises to priests; let us answer him in the words of Our Master: "It is written." Ambition leads to sad results. Disinterestedness and humility are the glory of the priesthood.

Second Sunday of Lent.

MEDITATION XXXIX.

JESUS ON MOUNT THABOR—THE TRANSFIGURATION AND THE PASSION.

1.—*Connection between these Two Mysteries.*

2.—*Many Christians and Priests Try to Separate Them.*

First Point.—The Passion and the Transfiguration are intimately connected. It is amid the splendor of His Transfiguration that Jesus Christ speaks of His death with two of His ministers

of the Old Covenant, in presence of three ministers of the New. What was there in common between Thabor and Calvary? In the first of these mysteries, everything savored of glory and delight for Jesus Christ; in the second, everything spoke of injuries and sufferings. On Mount Thabor He is resplendent as the sun, He is wrapped up in glory as with a bright garment; on Calvary He is naked, disfigured, covered with blood. On Mount Thabor the Father proclaims Him His well-beloved Son; on Calvary He exclaims: "God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" "On this day the apostles do not wish to leave His presence; on the day of His death they all forsake Him. Yet these two mysteries are intimately connected and explain each other. The one points to the crown prepared for us, the other teaches us its price. Considering and contrasting the two, we understand that here alone comfort and trials, glory and ignominy, can not be separated for long. The remembrance of this moderates our joys, comforts us in trials, fills us with hope. The Transfiguration has the particular virtue of kindling in our hearts the sacred fire of divine love. Were it not for the Transfiguration, we should not be so much moved by the thought of the Passion. After contemplating the grandeur of the Son of God we appreciate the charity which caused Him to humble Himself to the lowest debasement.

If He had not revealed His glories, we should not have thought of considering the sacrifice He made of these glories for us, not for a few hours nor for a few days only, but during the whole course of His life. A pious sentiment admitted by many mystical writers is, that the state of Jesus Christ on Mount Thabor possessed those qualities of His natural glorious state that could be beheld by human eye; and that His Transfiguration was not a miracle, but the momentary interruption of a miracle of love, without which He could neither humble Himself, suffer nor die for us. In the Garden of Olives He suspended the effect of the beatific vision, so that His soul might be oppressed under the weight of immense sadness; during His whole life He suspended the effect of the hypostatic union, so that His holy humanity might be subjected to humiliations, to sufferings, and to death.

Why were the apostles alone admitted to witness the Transfiguration? The apostles of Jesus Christ are called to a larger share in His humiliations, and to drink more abundantly from the cup of bitterness in this world. It was, consequently, necessary to teach them, that if they be faithful they are entitled to the highest honors in His kingdom. There are three kinds of saints in heaven who are raised to an especially high rank, and enjoy distinguished honors: Those who overcome the spirit of untruth by establishing

and defending the truth, as the doctors; those who triumphed over the world, as the martyrs; those who brought the flesh into subjection, as the virgins. The first class was represented on Mount Thabor by St. Peter, who is pre-eminently the master of faith; the second by St. James, who was the first among all the apostles to sign his faith with his blood; and the third by St. John: *Cui Christus in cruce matrem virginem virgini commendavit.* Now a good priest acquires claims to this three-fold glory. Of him it may be said as of the disciple whom Jesus loved: *Virgo est electus a Domino.* He is a martyr of charity, continually immolating himself for his flock: *Martyr semel propter Christum moritur, hic vero multoties propter gregem. Sic Paulus: Quotidie morior propter vestram salutem, fratres.* (St. Chrys.) He is a doctor: his mission is to dispel the darkness of ignorance: *Docete;* and if he fulfil it properly, he may depend upon the divine promise: "They that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity." (Dan. xii. 3.) O good Priest, remember heaven in the midst of your tribulations. Rejoice at the thought of that incomparable glory which awaits you, and which shall go on increasing with the number of those whom you save. Be patient, and say with St. Paul: "That the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." (Rom. viii. 18.) Often unite in your meditations the Transfiguration and the Passion, Mount Thabor and Calvary.

Second Point.—Many Christians and priests try to separate these two mysteries. These are led astray by the illusions of a convenient devotion. "It is good for us to be here." They are like St. Peter, willing to be with Jesus Christ, provided it be amid honors and delights. Yet Jesus was only a moment on Mount Thabor, and spoke only of His Passion. He devoted His whole life to the cross: *Tota vita Christi crux fuit et martyrium.* Who does not see that to speak of convenient devotion is to use a contradiction? For the word devotion means sacrifice, and a convenient devotion is a formal opposition to piety as taught and practised by Our Saviour. The piety which He practised consisted in continual immolation; and He declares it to consist in three points: To deny ourselves, to carry our cross, and to follow Him. This is the summary of the moral code that He came to teach mankind. To live in piety means to die to my inclinations, to my gratifications, to myself. Is it possible for me to die to everything and to myself also, without experiencing trouble and pain?

Is there, however, anything so common in the religious world, nay, in the sanctuary itself, as the pretension to unite piety with the pursuit of pleasure? "Jesus has many lovers of His heavenly

kingdom, but few that are willing to bear His cross. He finds many companions of His table, but few of His abstinence. All desire to rejoice with Him, few are willing to suffer with Him many follow Jesus in the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking the chalice of His Passion; many reverence His miracles, but few follow the ignominy of His cross." (Im. l. ii., ch. xi.) How many priests there are who renew every day at the altar the memory of a God, penitent, dying for us on Calvary, yet who practise no penance whatever. They preach the Gospel of self-denial, yet remain strangers to every practise of mortification. They lead a life of idleness in the most laborious of all states. They seek for pleasure serving a crucified God. Jesus performed miracles that he might suffer and be insulted; but they would perform miracles, if they could, to evade anything which would trouble their delicacy or wound their pride. How can they, without trembling, read the oracle of St. Paul: "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Rom. viii. 9.) Enter, therefore, with determination, and walk with constancy in this royal way of the cross, wherein all apostolic men and all the saints walked before you. "Why, then, are you afraid to take up your cross which leads to a kingdom? In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life. In the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness. In the cross is the perfection of sanctity. Take up, therefore, thy cross and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting." (Im. l. ii., ch. xii.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Intimate connection between the mystery of the Transfiguration and the mystery of the Passion. The first points out to the crown which is destined for us; the second its price Joys and sorrows can not long be separated on earth. If it were not for the Transfiguration we should not be so much moved at the thought of the Passion To appreciate what Jesus has done for us, we should always remember what He is. He chose for the witnesses of His Transfiguration those who were to have the larger share in His troubles on earth and in His glory in heaven.

Second Point.— Many Christians and priests seek to separate the two mysteries. These are the advocates of convenient devotion. They are willing to be with Jesus Christ, provided it be amid honors and delights. But piety without sacrifice is the very contradiction of that which was taught and practised by the Saviour. His doctrine is summed up in three points: To renounce ourselves, to carry our cross, and to follow Him. His example

consists in showing us how to suffer. Let us enter and walk in this royal way of the cross, wherein apostolic men and all the saints have preceded us.

Third Sunday of Lent.

MEDITATION XL.

"AT THAT TIME JESUS WAS CASTING OUT A DEVIL, AND THE SAME WAS DUMB."—THE MUTE DEVIL.

1.—*The Ravages He Makes in the Flock of Jesus Christ.*
2.—*How Pastors should Contend against Him.*

First Point.—The mute devil commits great ravages in the flock of Jesus Christ. "Death and life," says the Holy Ghost, "are in the power of the tongue." (Prov. xviii. 21.) What a source of life in the good use a priest makes of the gift of speech! But at the same time what more harmful than its bad use? St. James calls it "a world of iniquity." Is not silence alone often a great crime and a cause of many evils, when God commands us to speak? It is the temptation of muteness, which prevents the slaves of human respect from standing up boldly for God, whom they adore in the secret of their hearts, from denouncing scandals fearlessly. Though they grieve in their souls, they throttle truth and dare not profess their faith at the very time that silence must be interpreted as a sort of apostasy. Thus is virtue abandoned to insult by those who love and cherish its sacredness; impiety and licentiousness are sanctioned by those who love religion and morality; and as there is nothing so contagious as this weakness, a hundred men will lose heart because one allowed himself to be overcome by fear.

It is this devil of muteness that induces men of otherwise good life to pass whole years without receiving the sacraments. He changes into mortal poison the most wholesome of remedies, as we see in the case of those unfortunate souls who conceal their sins in confession. Urged by their conscience to be sincere, the confession was well commenced. One word more and they would have gained heaven, and acquired for this life a peace which surpasses all understanding. But the devil of muteness closed their lips; they expose themselves to the pains of hell, and are torn by cruel remorse.

But his ravages in the flock of Christ are never so dreadful as when he exerts his tyranny over the pastors themselves, either by paralyzing their tongues, or tempting them to speak in a weak, timid manner, when they ought to proclaim truth with holy energy and even boldness. O Priest of God, you allow this devil to triumph over you, when, having charge of souls, you neglect to instruct your people. Ignorance of religion carries all other evils in its train. When you do not correct sinners, who pervert your people, the licentious, blasphemers, the profaners of the Lord's day; when you do not stand up as a wall of brass against sinful practices; when, through lack of instruction, you allow the sacraments to be received without fruit and without respect; when, in the tribunal of penance, you do not instruct the guilty concerning obligations which you alone can make known to them—do you not act under the control of this devil of muteness? What means, St. Cyprian asks, this cruel mercy, which does not heal the wounded man, but merely covers up the sore? *Nihil in sacerdote*, says St. Ambrose, *tam periculosum est apud Deum, tam turpe apud homines, quam quod sentiat, non libere denuntiare.* Examine yourself seriously regarding those points. Have you that zeal which "reproves, entreats, rebukes in all patience"? (2 Tim. iv. 2.) Let us hear St. Jerome: *Si sacerdos est et non corripit delinquentes, sacerdotis officium praeterit.* Spare yourself the grief of exclaiming too late: "Woe is me, because I have held my peace." (Is. vi. 5.)

Second Point.—How we should contend against this mute devil. Is there question of human respect? Turn our weapons against that defect. What is the victim of human respect ashamed of? Of virtue, of religion, of God, of Jesus Christ, of all that is glorious? What is he afraid of? A word, a smile, the opinion of prejudiced and corrupt minds, whom he despises in his heart? He pretends to be independent, and yet submits to the most abject servitude, panders to the errors, caprices, and passions of those who attack him, allowing them to domineer over his very conscience. Is there any slave as low as he? If he has not lost his faith, let him consider the oracle of Jesus Christ: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when He shall come in His majesty." (Luke, ix. 26.)

In these days of preparation for the Easter communion, let us give special attention to these poor souls which the devil tempts so terribly, by urging them to conceal their sins at the very time when a full avowal would reconcile them to their God. How can pride be ashamed of so glorious a humiliation? Let us anticipate

the temptation by encouraging words. It is in this case especially that the confessor ought to show the consideration and tender compassion of a father.

Finally, to guard ourselves against the perfidious suggestions of the devil of muteness, let us often think of the account we will have to render of the talents and sacred duties intrusted to us. The pastor of souls should be wise and cautious, but he should also be firm and unyielding. "God hath scattered the bones of those who please men; they have been confounded, because God hath despised them." (Ps. lii. 6.) God will punish equally a despicable timidity with the most conspicuous crimes. "But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable and the murderers . . . their portion shall be in the pool burning with fire and brimstone." (Apoc. xxi. 8.) Let us heed the warning of St. Ambrose: *Canes muti reprobantur in scripturis unde et tu disce vocem tuam exercere pro Christo . . . ne quasi mutus canis commissam tibi Ecclesiae custodiam quodam praevaricationis silentio deseruisse videaris.* (Ps. cxviii.) Let us adopt the beautiful maxim of St. Gregory Nazianzen: "One thing only should the servant of God be afraid of, which is, of fearing something else more than God." *Nec quidquam metuendum est, quam ne quid magis quam Deum metuamus.*

You will receive at the altar Him whose power the people admired, exclaiming: "He made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak." Ask as a special favor that in giving you His sacred body, He may loose your tongue, that you may speak fearlessly whenever the interests of His glory and of the salvation of souls are concerned.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The devil of muteness commits great ravages in the flock of Christ. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Silence is sometimes a crime and the cause of serious evils. It is the silent devil who keeps mute the slaves of human respect; keeps them away from the sacraments, and especially from confession, or urges them to commit a sacrilege. But his ravages are never so deplorable as when he silences the tongue of the priest. Hence, it happens that instruction is neglected, correction is omitted, or feebly made. Let us spare ourselves the grief of saying, but alas, too late: "Woe is me; I have held my peace."

Second Point.—How we should contend against the devil of muteness. When it is a case of human respect, let us urge its poor unfortunate victim to blush by placing before him the object

of his fear. He is ashamed of all that is most noble, of virtue, religion, of God Himself. He fears that which is least of all to be feared, the judgment of men of warped mind. Let us show him another object of confusion and terror. "He that shalt be ashamed of me," etc. Let us take particular care of those souls which the devil tempts to conceal mortal sins in confession. Let us induce them to understand the glory and happiness resulting from a sincere and full confession. Finally, to guard ourselves against this despicable weakness, let us reflect on the account we will have to render of the gifts and duties intrusted to us. "God has scattered the bones of those who please men; they have been confounded, because God has despised them."

Fourth Sunday of Lent.

MEDITATION XLI.

MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES — CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the People Concerned in the Miracle.*
2.—*Listen to the Words of the Evangelist.*
3.—*Consider the Facts.*

First Prelude.—Jesus Christ, finding Himself in a desert place surrounded by a great multitude, instead of sending them away fasting, as the apostles desired, orders the latter to distribute among them five loaves and two fishes, which are miraculously multiplied so as to satisfy the hunger of five thousand men, not counting the women or children. Excited by this miracle, the people wish to proclaim Him king. (John, vi.)

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself a vast plain, in which Jesus is surrounded by His disciples and a crowd of people. He is engaged constantly in preaching, or in healing the sick.

Third Prelude.—Let us beseech the Saviour to unfold to our minds the meaning of the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, to infuse into our hearts the sentiments which it calls forth; but especially to give us grace to know and to love the Eucharistic banquet prefigured by this miracle.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. First, Jesus Christ. Consider His indefatigable zeal. After spending the whole day in instructing the people and healing the sick, He had retired with His apostles to a neighboring mountain to seek repose. However,

He soon returned. He was expected on the plain by a numerous multitude of men. They had already listened to His preaching, and desired to hear Him again. The fact that they had not eaten anything for a long time did not seem to annoy them. Imagine for a moment that you notice on His countenance an expression of tender compassion, caused by the sight of so many persons, in need of food, resembling sheep without a shepherd, and who had no hope of assistance except from Him. "When Jesus, therefore, had lifted up His eyes and seen that a very great multitude cometh to Him," etc.

"Blessed is the soul, O Lord, on which Thou lookest in Thy mercy!" It will surely be comforted, however great its affliction may be. Blessed is he who seeks Thee, whom Thou seest coming to Thee.

Consider the apostles. Here they are presented to us with their virtues and their foibles. Notice how earnestly at first they request Jesus Christ to dismiss the multitude, how little concerned they are about its welfare; and in the second place, how kindly they wait on the people when Jesus gives His command. Consider how annoyed they are when Christ commands them to distribute food to the crowds, and yet with what readiness they obey His order. "He commanded them to make them all sit down and they sat down." (Mark, vi. 24, 40.)

Now bestow your attention on the people. Their knowledge of Jesus Christ was certainly very imperfect; and the motive which led them to follow Him was far from a supernatural one. Yet how sincere the attachment they manifest for Jesus Christ Himself! How strong their constancy in following Him and remaining in His company! They hunger after the divine teaching; and this hunger of their souls makes them heedless of their bodily wants. How implicitly they rely on the power and goodness of Jesus. As long as they have the happiness to see and to hear Him they fear no untoward emergency. Why is not my confidence equal to theirs?

Second and Third Points.—Hear the words, consider the facts. "And when the day was now far spent, the disciples came to Him, saying: This is a desert place and the hour is now past. Send them away, that going into the next villages and towns, they may buy themselves meat to eat." (Mark, vi. 35, 36.)

Such is the conduct of men. When there is question of assisting others, they are always ready to adopt the measures which will give them the least trouble. They like to place their burden on the shoulders of others. Many of these people, exhausted by long abstinence, would have fainted on the way home if Christ

had dismissed them. O my God, send me not to human agencies for spiritual comfort. Their ability and willingness to afford assistance are very uncertain. Grant this comfort of Thyself, O Lord. I need only one thing—Thy love.

Humanly speaking, the proposal of the apostles was quite reasonable; the Saviour's answer must have amazed them: "They have no need to go; give you them to eat." (Matt. xiv. 16.) "But they replied: Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them that every one may take a little." This statement was equivalent to saying that it was utterly impossible for them to feed so many persons; and this was precisely the avowal God desired from them. The more limited human power, the more conspicuous is the power of God. He asks them how many loaves they have, and they answer, "Only five loaves and two fishes," and they hasten to add: "But what are these among so many?" Then Jesus said to them: "Bring them hither to Me, and He commanded them to make them all sit down by companies." "They sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties!" Then He raises His eyes to heaven, thanking His Father for the power He has given Him; He blesses the loaves and the fishes, divides them, and gives them to His apostles that they may distribute them to the people. In His sacred hands the bread is multiplied. All eat, all are filled, and the leavings, gathered up, filled twelve baskets. What thoughts occupied the minds of the apostles, while, through their ministry, a miracle so touching was being accomplished? What thoughts occupied the minds of those who ate the miraculous bread? How pure, how modest the joy of all the people! In this manner did the Son of God strengthen the faith of His disciples, give them an idea of His power, prepare the way for the institution of the Eucharistical banquet, "for, says the Evangelist, "the Pasch was near at hand." It was well to place before their eyes a figure of that Christian Pasch, in which the Lamb of God, mystically immolated, was to be eaten under the figure of bread.

For the Church was soon to spread all over the world. It was to be divided into many congregations, each under its particular pastor, from whom it was to receive the heavenly bread; and this living and life-giving food was never to be exhausted.

"They did all eat and were filled;" they were hungry and they relished the excellent food presented to them. Oh how much more proper it is that we should desire to partake of the Holy Eucharist! Are we exempt from infirmities and want in the desert of this life? Can the heavenly bread given to us be compared with the bread bestowed upon the people? We admire

many miracles, many mysteries in the Eucharist. "All were filled and strengthened." Such is the effect of the Holy Eucharist when it is well received. It entirely appeases spiritual hunger. We no longer seek the pleasures of earth when we have once tasted those of heaven. The Holy Eucharist imparts strength; it is appropriately called "the Bread of the strong." In admiration of the power and the goodness of the Saviour, the multitude wishes to proclaim Him king. Jesus, always humble, however, refused this honor, "and He fled again into the mountain Himself alone." (John, vi. 15.) His kingdom was not of this world. Ah! let us who know Him better than the Jews knew Him, call upon Him to reign in our hearts. This is the royalty which He desires to enjoy; and how much ought we to desire it.

Worthy communion brings under His subjection all the faculties of our souls, places us entirely under His blessed dependence. Let us on this day unite with the Church and petition to participate worthily in this holy mystery: *Da nobis, quaesumus, misericors Deus, ut sancta tua quibus incessanter explemur, sinceris tractemus obsequiis, et fideli semper mente sumamus.*" (Pots. Rom.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons concerned. Consider Jesus Christ and His indefatigable zeal. After caring for men's souls, He does not forget their corporal needs. How compassionately He looks upon the famished multitude which, for the sake of hearing Him, had forgotten food. Consider the apostles with their imperfections and their good qualities. They first urge Our Saviour to dismiss the people. However, as soon as He has given the order, they are willing and even anxious to minister to the wants of the people. Notice also the number of the multitude. How fully they rely on the goodness and the power of the Saviour. As long as they can see and hear Him they are afraid of nothing.

Second and Third Points.—Hear the words and consider the actions. What do the apostles say to Jesus Christ? "This is a desert place, the hour is late, dismiss the people." Men are always anxious to place their burdens on the shoulders of others. O my God, allow me not to seek mere human resources. In Thee alone do I confide. What does the Saviour answer? He desires the apostles themselves to feed the multitude, so to induce them to acknowledge their weakness, and to return to Him the glory of the miracle He is about to perform. Gifts multiply in the hands of Jesus. They eat, they are filled, and with the leavings fill twelve

baskets. Think of the reflection of those who eat this miraculous bread. This holy repast is the figure of the Eucharistic banquet. It contains nourishment far superior to that given to this people. Think how many graces flow from the Eucharist; how deliciously it satisfies the hunger of those who worthily receive it. Let us manifest our gratitude as did those people of yore. Jesus refuses the kingdom offered Him. He will accept dominion over our hearts. This is the kingdom He desires.

Passion Sunday.

MEDITATION XLII.

"WHICH OF YOU WILL CONVINCE ME OF SIN?" (John viii. 46.)—THE APOSTOLIC MAN AND HIS PERSECUTORS.

1.—*If the Apostolic Man is True to His Duty He will Meet with Persecution.*

2.—*His Conduct under such Circumstances.*

First Point.—The apostolic man will meet with opposition. In other words, there will always be those who dislike and oppose him. There was never a man who so well deserved the admiration and love of all as Our Lord Jesus Christ. His kindness, His condescension, the multitude of His miracles, which evidenced His goodness even more than His power, should have won all hearts. And yet no man ever received such contumely, such inhuman treatment.

Our Lord, knowing that the Pharisees were continually laying plots to kill Him, endeavors to open their eyes to the enormity of such a crime. He as much as says: Make public accusations. Bring forward one impeachable act, and then prove its illegality or its sinfulness. "Which of you can convince Me of sin?" Alas, truth and virtue are powerless with those who listen to the voice of passion. By their inability to bring accusation against Christ, the Pharisees confessed that He was above reproach. The proper inference to be drawn was: He is a just man, a prophet, perhaps the Messias; but, filled with jealousy, they answered: "Do we not say well, that Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?" Is it a proof of friendship with the devil to be without sin? Baffled hatred leads to rage. It begets insult and blasphemy.

If the ministers of Jesus Christ are faithful to their duty, they will be treated as was their Master. "If they have persecuted Me they will also persecute you. If they have kept My word, they will also keep yours." (John, xv. 20.) Everything was predicted. They are "the light of the world and the salt of the earth." Light is annoying to weak eyes; virtue banishes vice. "If I tell you the truth, why do you not believe Me?" (John, viii. 41.) Ah, this is precisely the reason why they will not believe. Lord, if we flatter the proud by teaching them that which they like to hear, they will readily believe us; but if we teach them distasteful truths, they resort to mockery. "They, therefore, took up stones to cast at Him." Often contradiction will come from those whom we thought our friends. Of this St. Paul complained in an affecting manner: "You received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Such was your affection toward me that if it could have been done, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and would have given them to me. Am I then become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. iv. 16.) There is no middle course. Either I must betray my sacred trust and sacrifice my conscience, or I must make up my mind to be thwarted in my designs, to be opposed and ill-treated. If I please the world, I must yield even to the passions of the world. Save me, O Lord, from a conduct so vacillating and sinful.

Second Point.—What should be the conduct of an apostolic man toward his persecutors? Our Saviour teaches us. To call a Jew a Samaritan was considered a gross insult, and to say any man was possessed was considered an outrage. To the first accusation Our Lord answered nothing, because it was a personal insult. The latter, however, He refutes by exposing the truth, and such an accusation might lower Him in the eyes of the people. Moreover, it could not be reconciled with His zeal for the glory of His Father. "I have not a devil, but I honor My Father and you dishonor Me." How admirable His self-control, how heavenly His calmness! When He rebuked vices, says St. Jerome, His words were full of energy. *Asper erat.* But when obliged to deny calumny, His answers were marked by evenness of temper: *Multa mansuetudine utebatur.* He denied He was a demoniac, He asserted that He honored His Father. This was His whole justification.

Behold our model. Let us repel with energy all insults against Our Lord, let us ignore those which are personal: *Quae ad Deum pertinent vindicare, quae vero ad nos despicere.* (St. Jerome, Hom. liv, in Joan.) Let our conduct be such as to enable us to say in all sincerity with Our Lord: "I seek not my own glory. There is One that seeketh and judgeth." Yes; there is One who will

maintain our dignity. God, who sees and governs and who judges all things, will one day make known all things. "He that judgeth me is the Lord who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart." (1 Cor. iv. 4, 5.) Let us, in imitation of Our Saviour, leave our injuries in the hands of Our Father: *Illatas contumelias Patris judicio reservat.* (St. Bon. Ex. 1 a, 4 l.) Let us give our reputation into His keeping. Our cause is His. He will give us victory, if not in this life, certainly at the Day of Judgment. Abused by men, we will be blessed by God, who will increase the joys of His servant in proportion to the trials endured for His sake. "They will curse and Thou wilt bless; let them that rise up against me be confounded; but Thy servant shall rejoice." (Ps. cviii. 28.)

The goodness of Jesus acts merely as an incentive to renewed persecution. His enemies take up stones, and would fain make Him suffer without a trial, the punishment decreed against blasphemers. But through love for us He made choice of another cruel and ignominious humiliation. By a miracle He glides unseen among them. His unexpected disappearance is their only punishment. Had He not the power and the right to punish them? Certainly. But He wished to teach us that patience should sometimes stay the hand of power, and right yield to charity; that there is more real greatness in suffering than in revenging, and finally, that power should be governed by generosity and mercy.

Let us not forget that we have been sent like lambs among wolves. But let us always possess our souls in patience, so that the most offensive treatment may never extort from us a harsh word. Let us render good for evil, love for hatred, meekness for wrath. "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good." (Rom. xii. 21.) The Lamb of God, which will soon be the nourishment of our souls, will instill into us these holy dispositions if we pray fervently for them.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—An apostolic man will always meet with opposition. He will always find some that will oppose and dislike him. The Saviour was persecuted. "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?" In not making accusation after this challenge, the enemies of Christ avowed that His conduct was irreproachable. They, however, continue their attacks, and call Him a Samaritan, a demoniac. Such is the lot of a good priest. He is the light of the world, the salt of the earth. Light, however, is always offensive to weak eyes. Virtue is displeasing to vice. Contra-

diction often comes from those whom we considered our friends. Either I must be lax in my ministry, or be ready to meet opposition and annoyance.

Second Point.—What should be the conduct of a good priest toward his enemies? Jesus Christ teaches us: "I have not a devil, but I honor My Father." Consider His calmness, His self-possession. Let us repel with energy insults offered to God; let us ignore those directed against ourselves. Let us give up to the Lord the care of our justification. Our cause is His. Let us never forget that we have been sent like lambs among wolves, and that our duty is to render good for evil.

Friday of Passion Week.

MEDITATION XLIII.

MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

1.—*Her Love of Jesus Christ Gives Us an Idea of Her Sufferings.*
2.—*Her Sufferings Help Us to Understand the Love She Bears Us.*

First Point.—The love of Mary for Jesus is a proof and measure of her sufferings at the foot of the cross.—The greater her love for the adorable Victim which suffers under her eyes, the more important is the part she takes in His sufferings. Hers is a martyrdom of love, of which the heart is the victim. What is the nature of the love of Mary for Jesus? It is the true love of the most tender Mother for her Son, of the holiest of creatures for her God.

I. Love of a mother. Nature knows no other love equal to a mother's love. The mother lives, suffers, rejoices in her child. Hear the cry of the woman of Chanaan: "Have mercy on me! My daughter is grievously troubled by a devil!" (Matt. xv.) It is to the mother herself that the Lord, in relieving the distress of her daughter, shows pity. God in creating Mary had destined her to be the Mother of His incarnate Son, and in consequence formed in her the most maternal of all hearts. The heart of Mary, moreover, was never divided by any of those imperfect affections common to the hearts of other mothers. It must also be borne in mind that no son had ever so many lovable qualities. Her love may be considered as due to the charming individuality of Jesus, or to the priceless favors which He bestowed on her. Every single privilege which Mary possesses owes its principle and development

t the fact of her divine maternity. She loved Jesus with a mother's love, and this affection was intensified by the knowledge that He was more estimable than all the sons of men.

II. She loved Jesus as her God. To the fervor of her maternal love was added the fire of divine charity. According to the opinion of the ablest Doctors of the Church, the love of Mary toward God, from the very moment of her most pure conception, surpassed that of the seraphs. Now this love for God continued, through her intimate relations with Jesus, to increase in intensity; not only during the nine months she bore him in her womb, but also during the thirty-three years of His mortal life, Mary never failed to avail herself of the graces she received with every moment; and this fidelity was ever rewarded by a continual development of charity. Such was the love of Mary's heart for her Son and her God. From this, if we can, let us fathom the depth of her affliction when she heard that the Passion of her Son had begun, when she followed its progress, more especially when she beheld its awful termination on Mount Calvary. How bitterly she regretted not to have been with her Son in the garden of Gethsemane, and in the house of Caiaphas. She might have wiped the bloody sweat from His face, might have shared in the ministrations of the comforting angel. She might have offset so many insults by adoration, and mitigated such inhumanity by tenderness.

She hastens to seek her Son. Alas, where and in what state will she find Him? He is about to be scourged. She sees the crowd rushing toward the pretorium. She hears the lashes; later on she will hear the hammers driving nails into His hands and feet. The sight of Christ crucified should draw our attention to the foot of the cross. There we behold the Queen of martyrs. Her sorrows have reached their extremity. The present situation is immeasurably different from that of the circumcision. There Jesus lost but a few drops of blood, easily stanched. Now, however, from His torn and mangled body, from His deep and numerous wounds, the blood flows in streams. Her presence brings Jesus no comfort, but rather an increase of sufferings: *Quis est homo qui non fleret, matrem Christi si videret in tanto supplicio?* What bitter sorrow must have convulsed those loving hearts which knew each other so intimately! Their mutual love produces still another wound. This mutual love can be compared to two fires which burn the brighter and fiercer for their mingling. We can picture Mary compassionating Jesus dying, and resigning herself with Him. "O God, O my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Yet, O my God, I submit to Thy will. I commend my soul into Thy hands by giving to Thee the life of my Son, which is a hundred

times dearer to me than my own." Thus all is consummated. A mutual immolation is made by Mother and Son. "It is consummated." Let us mingle our tears with those of the disconsolate Mother. Let us grieve for having been the cause of her deep affliction; but let us also seek therein motives of consolation.

Second Point.—The sufferings of Mary on Calvary a proof and measure of her love for us.—That the Mother of God exerts an all-powerful influence over her Son by her prayers is a matter which admits of no doubt. Numberless facts and the precise teaching of the Doctors of the Church leave no room for dispute. St. Anselm sums up the tradition of the Church on this point as follows: *Ut impossibile est quod illi, a quibus virgo Maria oculos suae misericordiae avertit, salventur; ita necessarium est quod hi ad quos convertit oculos suos, pro eis advocans, justificentur et glorificentur.* (St. Ans. in parte 4, 4, t. 15, c. 14.) What more, then, remains for us to desire, since Mary's love for us is equal to her power? Who will, however, instill into our minds a conviction so sweet? Mary at the foot of the cross. Let us endeavor to understand what she does for love of us, and also what Jesus dying on the cross does to increase this love.

I. St. Thomas thinks that God desired the consent of Mary before taking her Son from her, just as He had required it before giving Him to the world. She was requested to sanction this sanguinary immolation, as she had consented to His Incarnation in her womb. But was there anything so great at stake which could compensate such a mother for the loss of such a son? Yes; there was such an interest at stake, the welfare of our salvation. Whereupon, St. Bonaventure says: *Sic Maria diiexit munaum ut filium suum unigenitum daret.* Her love of Jesus was her torture; her love of us was her support.

From the moment that the angel had announced to her that she would be the Mother of the Redeemer, she had partly foreseen the full responsibility of this dignity. She understands it now in a manner truly appalling. She is strengthened, however, in this supreme trial, by the same devotion to our interests which had enabled her before to accept so many other sorrows. To-day, in her agony, she repeats to God what she had said in accepting the divine maternity: "Be it done unto me according to Thy word." Or she says with her Son, and with the same sentiments: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me." O my Father, if this chalice can pass away from me, and I may not drink it to the bitter dregs! Contemplate the face of Christ, Thy Son and mine also. Has He not suffered enough? Ah, couldst Thou preserve for His afflicted Mother the breath of life which is still left Him!

If, however, O Lord, the redemption of men can not be accomplished unless I see Him dying under my eyes, let Thy will be done. "Not my will but Thine be done." God selected this moment, in which, through love of men, she made this most heroic of sacrifices, to make her truly our Mother. "Behold thy son . . . behold thy Mother." But do we comprehend how she understood this last act of the will of Jesus Christ toward us?

If, up to this moment, she had felt nothing but indifference, surely words like these and in such circumstances would have inspired her with the most ardent maternal love. Her dying Son is He who speaks to her: *Mulier.* "Woman!" In not giving thee a sweeter name, I spare thy sacred heart. Thou seest what I have done for men, and how much I desire their happiness; into thy hands I commend their fate. Be their Mother. Love them as you have loved Me. Behold standing here John, My disciple; in him consider all My disciples; love Me in them, by loving them for Me. "Behold thy son." Ah, how the love of Mary increased at hearing this last recommendation of her dying Son! Ah, if another mother were able to forget her children, Mary can no more forget us than she can forget the scene on Calvary. Let us comfort her in her sorrow. Let us endeavor, if such a thing is possible, to fill the place of the adorable Son whom she sacrificed for us. Let us, above all, fear to afflict her again by not confiding in her love. To her love we have a particular claim, as priests and co-operators with Jesus Christ in the redemption of men. John as disciple represented all Christians; as apostle, he represented all evangelical laborers, who, to the end of time, would apply to souls the merits of the redeeming blood: *Eia mater, fons amoris, me sentire vim doloris, fac ut tecum lugeam. . . . Fac ut ardeat cor meum in amando Christum Deum, ut sibi complaceam.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The love of Mary for Jesus is a measure of her sufferings at the foot of the cross. She loved Him as her Son. The heart of a mother is all tenderness. A mother lives in her child as much and more than in herself. Never did another son present so many charms to the love of a mother. For all the privileges she enjoyed she was indebted to Jesus Christ. She loved Him as her God. If her love at the very moment of her Immaculate Conception surpassed that of the seraphs, what must it have been after thirty-three years, since each moment brought to her an increase of this virtue? Let us start from these two principles in order to sound the depth of her affliction, from the

first circumstances of the Passion, when she followed its progress, when, with her own eyes, she witnessed its appalling consummation on Calvary.

Second Point.—Sufferings of Mary at the foot of the cross are a measure of her love for us. St. Thomas thinks that she was desired to give her formal consent to the bloody immolation of her Son, as she had given it to His Incarnation. The love of Mary for Jesus caused her torment, her love for us was her support. How wonderful the power of a love which enabled her to suffer such a sacrifice! This love, however, must have received a prodigious increase when her divine Son, expiring on the cross, gives us to her as her children. Priests have a particular claim to the love of Mary, being co-operators with Jesus Christ in the redemption of men.

Palm Sunday.

MEDITATION XLIV.

TRIUMPHANT ENTRANCE OF JESUS INTO JERUSALEM—CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons Concerned.*
2.—*Hear their Words.*
3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—Jesus, drawing near to Jerusalem, called two of His disciples and said: "Go ye into the village that is over against you, and immediately you shall find an ass tied and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. . . . And the disciples going did as Jesus commanded them, and they brought the ass and the colt and laid their garments upon them, and made Him sit thereon. . . . And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way, and others cut boughs from the trees and strewed them in the way; and the multitude that went before and that followed cried, saying: Hosanna to the Son of David." (Matt. xxi. 1 et seq.) And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said to Him, "Master, rebuke Thy disciples." (Luke, xix.)

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the road from Bethphage to Jerusalem covered with garments, strewed with leaves and boughs of trees, and the great multitude escorting the Saviour.

Third Prelude.—Ask of Our Lord grace to comprehend the vanity of all human glory. Ask Him to make a triumphant entry into your soul, and to always reign there.

First Point.—Consider the persons concerned. Jesus, the adorable hero. He leaves Bethany and the household of Lazarus, which, a few days before, He had found in tears, and which is now filled with joy. See how He condescends to participate in the joy of a people who acknowledge Him to be the Messias, or at least a great prophet. In the sending of the two disciples to Bethphage, admire the knowledge He had of the future as of the present, of events depending on the free will of men, as well as those which result from a necessary cause. Notice His calm, sweet majesty in the midst of this spontaneous ovation, in which everything breathes simplicity. His calmness is the same in the midst of honors as it will be amid reproaches. While appreciating the marks of affection which He receives, He reflects on the inconstancy of the human heart. Consider the apostles who surround their Master and take part in His triumph. Is there for the ministers of the Lord a satisfaction more deeply felt than that of seeing Him known, adored and loved? The good unite with Him, grieved when He is offended, happy when He is glorified. Consider the people participating in this triumph. They were the inhabitants of Jerusalem and strangers who had come hither for the Passover celebration. Some of them were already His disciples; the others were inclined to adhere to Him, because of the miracles which they had seen Him perform, or of which they had been told. All were favorably impressed through the recent raising of Lazarus. See joy depicted on all countenances. You yourself rejoice, seeing that at last your divine King is justly treated. But where is Mary? Why did she not come and enjoy the triumph of her Son? She was near Him in the stable, she will accompany Him to Calvary, but on the day of His glory she hides herself. She wishes to teach me that obscurity and a desire to remain unknown are the safest way to remain united to God, and to advance in His love. By her example she encourages me to seek during this life, not that which flatters, but rather that which mortifies nature.

Second Point.—Listen to the words. Among the people, now free to speak out their sentiments, the disciples of Jesus Christ form themselves into groups, proclaim His praise, relate His miracles and His good deeds. They communicate their feelings to the multitude. Soon we hear the throngs which precede and those which follow celebrating aloud the glory of God, and blessing the Son of David who comes in the name of the Lord: "The multitude that went before and that followed cried, saying: Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest." (Matt. xxi. 9.)

But the praises offered to God are a torment to the wicked

The Pharisees are enraged by what they witness. They wish that the Master should command His disciples to be silent: "Master, rebuke Thy disciples." He answers: "I say to you, that if these hold their peace, the stones will cry out." (Luke, xix. 40.) Those stones did speak. They cried out at the death of their Creator, when His disciples held their peace. Their voice was heard. It touched the most hardened hearts, and forced them to acknowledge that the Crucified was really the Son of God. (Matt. xxvii. 54.)

O Jesus, will the tongue of Thy ministers cease to praise, and to convert souls to Thee, when that of the wicked is so ready with words of scandal and blasphemy? Grant that we may speak out with courage when there is question of Thy interests; grant especially that the holiness of our life may speak so loudly as to confound Thy enemies, and to edify Thy servants, and that everything within us may bless Thee and render Thee homage.

Third Point.—Consider the actions. After leaving Bethany, Jesus sends two of His disciples to the next village. To them the order must have appeared strange, imprudent, apt to excite murmuring; yet they obey with simplicity. The esteem they had for Him did not permit them to entertain such thoughts as those. They start immediately. Their act is the prelude to that obedience which Jesus will require of them when He will command them to go and teach all nations, to break their chains asunder, and to bring them to Him, that they may increase the glory of His triumph.

At Jerusalem, as soon as the people are informed of His coming, they go out in crowds to meet Him. As soon as they perceive Him a transport of joy seizes them; they cut off branches of palm and olive trees, hold them in their hands and wave them in sign of gladness. Each one does what he can to welcome the King of Israel, the Messenger of God. These spread out their garments on the road, others strew leaves of trees over it. Jesus advances, enters Jerusalem, and goes up to the Temple amid the acclamations of an ever-growing multitude, which ceases not to bless Him. We have seen the accomplishment of the prophecy: "Say to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King comes to thee, meek."

This triumph, however, is the image of another triumph, in which the prophecy finds a more perfect accomplishment. We refer to the triumph of Jesus Christ, who, after banishing sin from a soul, re-enters it through a worthy communion. The palms are an emblem of the victories gained by that soul over her enemies, and the garments spread along the way figure the vices which she drove out, in order to approach the holy table. O priest, you procure for Jesus Christ this triumph, so dear to His heart, as often as you bring back stray sheep to the fold, as often as you lead

back the prodigal son to the house of his Father. When He enters those living temples adorned by your hands, the heavenly Jerusalem is moved with joy. "When He entered Jerusalem, the whole city was moved."

The angels applaud the success of your zeal, the glory given to Jesus Christ, the happiness procured to your brethren. "I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance." (Luke, xv. 10.)

Colloquy with Jesus Christ. Adore, glorify Him, with all the saints and the angels of heaven, and with all the just of earth. Thank Him for having come to us full of meekness in the mystery of the Incarnation, for coming to us every day in a more charming manner, through the Sacrament of His body and blood. Ask of Him the grace of immovable constancy, that we may praise Him now, and praise Him in eternity.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. Jesus accepts the ovation extended to Him by a grateful people. Admire His majesty, full of sweetness. Though sensible to the marks of affection bestowed upon Him, He thinks on the inconstancy of the human heart. The apostles, who surround their Master and rejoice in His triumph. Is there any satisfaction for the good priest equal to that of seeing Jesus known, adored and loved? Contemplate the people, in their delight seeking every means to manifest their devotion to Jesus Christ. Mary is not there. She wishes to teach me to seek, during this life of trials, not that which flatters, but that which mortifies human nature.

Second Point.—Hear the words. The disciples of the Saviour proclaim His praise, relate His miracles, bless the Son of David, who comes in the name of the Lord. The Pharisees murmur. What does Jesus Christ answer them? O good Master, shall the tongue of Thy ministers be silent when there is question of praising Thee, of gaining the hearts of men to Thee?

Third Point.—Consider the actions. The docility of the two disciples. They obey at once. The people come out of Jerusalem to meet Him who is about to enter it triumphantly. Each one vies to welcome the Messenger of God. Jesus comes amid the acclamations of the crowd, which ceases not to bless Him. This triumph is the image of the one which He gains when, through holy communion, He re-enters a soul from which sin had banished Him.

Monday in Holy Week.

MEDITATION XLV.

TRIUMPH OF JESUS CHRIST ENTERING OUR SOULS THROUGH HOLY COMMUNION.

1.—*How Ardently the Saviour Desires this Triumph.*
2.—*How Ardently We should Desire It Ourselves.*

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Jesus Christ speaking for the first time on the mystery of the Eucharist. Think of the astonishment of those who heard Him propounding so strange a doctrine.

Second Prelude.—Let us beseech Him to enlighten us regarding this ineffable mystery, and to give us a perfect faith and an ardent love for holy communion.

First Point.—Jesus Christ desires ardently to unite Himself to us through the Holy Eucharist. When one is blessed with a firm will and an ardent desire in the execution of a project, no difficulty seems to be insurmountable, every sacrifice is cheerfully made, every means of success employed. This consideration aids us to understand how ardently the Son of God desires to give Himself to us through holy communion.

I. Think of the difficulties to be overcome in order to attain this end! The God-man, living and immortal, was to become the nourishment of men, permit them to eat His flesh, and to drink His blood! The mere pronunciation of these words surpasses our reason. Can one imagine anything offering so many impossibilities to the mind? Who are we, O Lord, and who art Thou, that Thou shouldst condescend to honor us by so amazing an alliance? The food which I take becomes part of my own being; how could nothingness become one with the Creator of the universe? Thou sayest to me: "He that eateth Me, shall live by Me." To live Thy life is undoubtedly the most desirable of all blessings; but how is it possible that I should eat Thee? The most exalted of heavenly powers tremble in Thy presence, *tremunt potestates*. How canst Thou say to creatures which are nothing: "Take and eat, this is My body; drink, this is My blood"? It is true, I hear the Saviour reply: To all My disciples I extend this invitation, which astonishes heaven as well as earth. It is verily so. I desire

to be thine, as the bread which nourishes thee, as the drink which quenches thy thirst. "For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." To accomplish My desire, I shall have indeed to display the strength of my arm and to multiply wonders. "Through Me it is that kings reign," and I shall have to obey, not for a few moments only, but until the consummation of the world. At the voice of My servants I shall have to destroy the substance of the bread, without in the least changing its appearance. I shall have to be at the same time upon thousands of altars, under the appearance of millions of Hosts, without any loss of My unity; those Hosts shall be divided, and I shall not cease to be indivisible. But My love demands all those miracles, and My power will perform them. Nor is this all.

II. To realize this design of incomprehensible charity, it was necessary that the Son of God should enter on a long career of humiliations which seemed to be irreconcilable with the brightness of His glorified humanity. Should we have dared to take Him as the food of our souls, if He had not concealed Himself, annihilated Himself more thoroughly than in the mysteries of His Incarnation, of His birth, and of His death? It is at His own table, more than anywhere else, that He shall be the hidden God, and too often, alas, the unknown God! How many unfortunate souls will make a sacrilegious abuse of this obscurity which He knew to be necessary to render Himself accessible to all! But He was more in dread of disturbing the confidence of the just, in permitting a ray of His glory to appear, than of exposing Himself to the outrages of sinners in veiling the splendor of His holy majesty. As a consequence, His presence will be denied, He will be despised, insulted. To this He must resign Himself if He wishes to unite Himself to us in this sacred intimacy. He foresees it, His heart expects it. "My heart hath expected reproach and misery." (Ps. lxviii. 21.) And He does not refuse to drink the bitter cup; everything is sacrificed to the desire of identifying Himself with us, and of being able to say of each of us: "He abideth in Me, and I in him."

III. As, moreover, the union which He desired to contract with us was to be a free one on our part, it was necessary that He should draw our will to its completion, and that He should triumph over our blind indifference. Let us see what means He has employed to induce us to approach Him. He invites us to this Eucharistic banquet, where everything is so great: He who gives it, the food which He furnishes, the number of the guests. "He made a great supper; and invited many." To the invitation He adds urgent entreaties. "Compel them to come in." This is

not enough. He makes use of His sovereign authority. He commands us to eat His flesh and to drink His blood. How this commandment proves the amazing goodness of His heart! Blessed and immortal life is promised to those who will observe it, reprobation and eternal death to any one who will refuse to submit to it. (John, vi. 54, 55.) O desire, O invincible love of Jesus! How will you be understood by His disciples if you are not understood by His priests?

Second Point.—How ardently we should desire to unite ourselves to Jesus Christ through holy communion. The Prophet Zacharias exclaimed: "What is the good thing of Him, and what is His beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect, and wine springing forth virgins?" (Zach. ix. 17.) Let us consider the oracle of the same prophet quoted in the Gospel, and let us say to our soul what we are commanded to tell the daughter of Sion: "Behold thy King comes to thee, meek." My King is He who is coming; He comes to me, He comes for me.

"Behold thy King." Jesus is my King; He possesses all the royal virtues in a supreme degree of perfection; but in this mystery, meekness and tender charity seem to throw the splendor of His other virtues into the shade. Meek: He was meek at Bethlehem when He came into the world; He was meek when He entered Jerusalem. There was nothing in Him or about Him that excited dread; everything led to entire confidence. But He shows more meekness still when He gives Himself to me through holy communion. One would say that He closes His eyes to my defects, that He will see nothing but my miseries. He comes, He does not wait for me to go; He comes not as of old into the world, or to one people, or to one city, but to me, "He comes to thee, meek." From the bosom of His Father He comes into my heart. How unworthy I am to become His dwelling. How can He dwell amid my tepidities, my frivolous thoughts, my innumerable imperfections! He comes for me. What does He gain by the union? What fitness is there found in this, save that it is proper for goodness to do good?

I understand it, O Lord. In this triumph, all is for me. Thou comest to me with Thy compassionate heart, the assistance of Thy mighty power, the treasures of Thy grace. Thou comest to heal one who is blind and sick, to deliver a captive, to restore to my soul a blessed liberty by breaking the bonds which attach me to creatures; and to give me peace by subjecting all my inclinations to Thy law. O Jesus, purify my heart, adorn it with Thy virtues, make it the seat of Thy empire, and when, after a moment, the angels see Thee take possession of it, may they be entitled to say,

while repeating the heavenly Hosanna, that Thy kingdom in me shall not be disturbed, that it shall be without end, like the kingdom which Thou hast in store for Thy elect. "And of His kingdom there shall be no end."

Reanimate in your heart the love of holy communion, communicate it to others as far as you can, as a most certain means of pleasing Our Lord Jesus Christ, and of saving souls by communicating to them the very life of the Saviour.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Jesus Christ desires ardently to unite Himself to us in the Holy Eucharist. Let us judge of this desire by the difficulties which He overcomes, by the sacrifices which He makes, by the means which He employs. I. A God-man says, "My flesh is meat indeed." The mere announcement surpasses our comprehension. Who are we, O Lord, and who art Thou, that Thou shouldst think of such a union? I have willed it, He answers, and if, in order to realize it, miracles will have to be multiplied, I will accomplish them. II. The Saviour foresees all the outrages to which He exposes Himself in concealing Himself in this Sacrament. He accepts this new cup of sorrows; He sacrifices everything to the desire of uniting Himself to us. III. As the union must be entirely free on our part, consider what He does to attract our will toward it. He invites us to the Eucharistic banquet; to invitations He adds pressing entreaties, nay, His authority; He commands us to receive communion, threatening eternal death if we resist, promising a life of eternal bliss if we obey.

Second Point.—How ardently we should desire the entrance of Our Lord Jesus Christ into our hearts through holy communion. "Behold thy King comes to thee, meek." Jesus is my King; He comes, He attracts me by His meekness; He comes with His tender compassion, His infinite perfection, the treasure of all His graces. He comes to heal one who is blind and sick, to give me peace, to load me with all blessings. Come Thou, O blessed King, and, when Thou shalt be taking possession of my heart, may Thine angels predict that Thy reign in me shall last forever!

Tuesday in Holy Week.

MEDITATION XLVI.

JESUS WEEPS OVER JERUSALEM—CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons Concerned.*
2.—*Hear their Words.*
3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—"When the Lord drew near Jerusalem, seeing the city, He wept over it, saying: If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straighten thee on every side; and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." (Luke, xix, 41, 44.)

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the road from Bethphage to Jerusalem strewed with leaves of trees, filled with a joyful multitude, and in the midst of them Jesus Christ advancing toward the city, manifesting pleasure mingled with sadness.

Third Prelude.—Beg of the heart of Jesus to be allowed to enter into its sentiments of compassion at the thought of the blindness and fate of sinners.

First Point.—In Jerusalem, contemplate the enemies of Our Saviour. The dangers and misfortunes which threaten them affect Him more than the tokens of esteem and affection which He receives. His enemies are aggravated at hearing others speak of the raising of Lazarus, which formed the only topic of conversation in Jerusalem, bringing so much honor to Him whom they hated; they felt angry at the satisfaction evinced by the admirers of Jesus, and at their eagerness in going out of the city to meet Him. Others, entirely taken up by business and pleasures, attach but very little importance to religious questions, and give the event very little attention. Outside of Jerusalem are numerous groups, each endeavoring to surpass the other in the manifestation of their respect and affection toward the glorious Son of David, who had done all things well. The apostles are happy to see that justice has at last been done their Master. He is now honored

as He deserves to be. All tongues proclaim His praise, they hear naught but benedictions, they see only signs of joy. Consider Jesus whose presence causes these rejoicings, to whom are addressed all those songs of triumph. He alone apprehends a cause for tears amid those flattering demonstrations. He sees Jerusalem and He weeps. Ah! how frivolous are the thoughts of men! Too often a serious soul, which considers things from the standpoint of faith, finds cause for lamentation where others see only cause for rejoicing! Jesus weeps over a city which is about to crucify Him, and yet we know that He ardently sighs after the moment on which He will be baptized in His blood. Why does He weep, since He desires the cruel death which will perfect His triumph? I penetrate Thy heart, O Thou most tender, generous Friend; Thou lovest the sufferings which save us, our evils draw tears from Thy eyes. As for us we are moved little either by our misfortunes or by Thy love!

Second and Third Points.—Hear what is said and consider what is done. Jesus, bringing to His mind the remembrance of all that He had done for the guilty city, and the thought of what she is about to do to fill up the measure of her crimes, is not satisfied with weeping over her; but to teach us, He wishes us to know the cause of His tears. He is grieved, because He foresees how Jerusalem will make an ill use of His graces, not utilizing the benefits to be derived from this visitation. Oh, thou ungrateful city, if at least on this day, which is thine still, and which can still be the day of thy salvation, thou wouldst know that which I proffer to thee in offering thee peace! "If thou hadst known the things which are for thy peace." He says no more, His tears and His silence express His sentiments.

It is true, therefore, that the time of mercy is not yet over for this guilty city. But it will soon have passed away; it is only one day. Is life anything more compared with eternity? How rapidly it passes off! If, on this day of grace, Jerusalem had opened her eyes, if she had welcomed her Liberator with the same good will as the multitude, then, indeed, the triumph of Jesus would have been complete. In place of shedding tears, He would have given way to joy. Jerusalem should have been forever the beloved city of the Lord, the queen of nations. Thus, also, there is no sinner, no matter how wicked, but can return to God, and find peace once more; but he must will it. Jerusalem remains obstinate, and becomes hardened. She does not see the blessings she loses, the misfortunes she incurs, the transgressions which defile her, nor the crime she is about to commit. "But now they are hidden from thy eyes." She has neglected the day of salvation. "The days

shall come upon thee." Days of wrath shall succeed days of clemency. The eternity of God will replace the day of man. He wil visit in indignation those who refused to receive Him in His visitation of love. "Thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." In the midst of the outburst of joy caused by His presence this grieves the heart of Jesus. Should not His tears have softened the most hardened hearts, and filled the most rebellious with compunction? Sinners may resist threats and promises; but is it possible to resist the tears of a God? What should we think of a criminal who scorns his judge at the very time that this judge, in tears, seems to say to him: "Spare me the grief I must feel in condemning you, for you see that I love you!"

O priest, in these divine tears study the evil of impenitence, the disorder of passion, the malice of sin, the folly of worldly joys; but, above all, the charitable compassion of the heart of Jesus Christ. Learn from His deep affliction the excess of His tenderness, and the extent of His sorrow when a sinner is lost. Ask grace to weep with Him over the sad state of those sinners whom He loves so much as to die for their salvation, and whom, nevertheless, He will not save, not even in dying for them. Labor incessantly; pray and induce others to pray for the conversion of sinners.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons concerned. In Jerusalem the enemies of the Saviour, and those who pay no heed to Him. The first show anger at the satisfaction manifested by the admirers of Jesus; the second care nothing. Outside of Jerusalem numerous groups vying with each other in the manifestation of their sentiments toward Him who did all things well. The apostles overjoyed to see that at last justice is done to their Master. Jesus, the object of the ovation, alone discovers a reason for tears under those flattering demonstrations. He loves the sufferings which save us; but the blindness which destroys our souls draws tears from His eyes.

Second and Third Points.—Hear the words, consider the actions. Jesus grieves to see how Jerusalem will again misuse this visitation of mercy, which is to be the last. "This day is thine, O thou ungrateful city; it could be still the day of thy salvation wert thou willing to open thine eyes!" He says no more, but His tears

speak eloquently. There is no sinner that can not return to God; but it must be of his own free will. If he remains obstinate, the days of wrath shall follow the days of clemency! Think of a criminal who would scorn his judge at the very moment that this judge, with tears in his eyes, seems to say to him: "Spare me the sorrow I must feel in condemning you, for you see that I love you!" O priest of God, study in these divine tears the evil of impenitence, the charitable compassion of Jesus.

Wednesday in Holy Week.

MEDITATION XLVII.

JESUS WASHES THE FEET OF HIS APOSTLES—CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons Concerned.*
2.—*Hear their Words.*
3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—"When supper was done, [Jesus] knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands, and that He came from God and goeth to God, He riseth from supper and layeth aside His garments . . . and began to wash the feet of His disciples." (John, xiii. 2.) In vain does St. Peter in his humility endeavor to resist the Son of God; he obeys at last. When the Saviour had washed the feet of each of them, He sits down and explains to them what He has just done.

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the cenacle, such as Christ had described it: "A large room furnished," and the divine Master at the table with His disciples.

Third Prelude.—Grant me grace, O Jesus, to imitate Thy example, to practise the lessons of humility and charity which Thou givest us in this mystery.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons concerned. Jesus Christ. He is conscious of His sovereign authority, of His absolute power. "Knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands." He knows who He is, whence He comes, whither He is going. "That He came from God and goeth to God." Will He avail Himself of this to demand the acts of homage due Him? Not at all. However, to impart more effect to the lesson of humility which He is about to give, "He riseth from supper." His

adorable person appears at this moment resplendent with unusual majesty. The apostles. They are attentive under the influence of a respectful curiosity. They seem to have a presentiment that some great mystery is about to be accomplished. Peter. How confused he is when he sees his Master approaching him prepared to wash his feet. Judas. He is somber and worried; one would think him insensible in the midst of the general emotion. Let us observe what is about to take place. We should not lose one detail of so touching and instructive a scene.

Second and Third Points.—Consider what is done; hear the words. "Supper being done," the apostles being still at the table, "Jesus riseth. He layeth aside His garments, and having taken a towel, He girded Himself, after that He putteth water into a basin." What is He about to do? How astonished must have been the witnesses of these preparations, and how astonished we should be ourselves when we reflect on them. How is it? Will the Creator of the universe, the Lord of heaven and earth, put Himself at the feet of men, performing for them the office of servant? Has Jesus forgotten that He is God, equal in all things to His Father, that His sacred humanity will soon be glorified, that the Lord will say to Him: "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool?" All this He knows. Let us not forget it. Let the thought of His attributes aid us to penetrate deeper into the mystery of His humiliations.

He comes to Simon Peter, bends before him; but Peter, rising up in amazement, prostrates himself and exclaims: "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet!" Thee I adore as the Christ, the Son of the living God; wouldst Thou debase Thyself to wash my feet, could I suffer it? Jesus answers: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." O Peter, search not My designs. What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Thou knowest not the purity required of him who will partake of the food which I am about to give; neither dost thou know the dignity, the ministries which I have in store for thee. Many are the things hidden from us by God. Let us suffer Providence to guide us, let us submit and adore. Time, but especially eternity, shall reveal to us many secrets. At the words of Jesus, Peter looks upon Him; for a moment he remains undecided, but he cannot bear to see his Master performing the office of a servant. "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Peter's resistance was now going too far. Let us acknowledge ourselves unworthy of God's blessings, but when He commands, our duty is to obey. The humility which refuses His gifts degenerates into pride and presumption. Jesus made an answer which ended the contest: "If

I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me." Thou wilt obey, or I shall cease to consider thee My disciple; thou shalt be none of Mine. The threat was a dreadful one. To be separated from Jesus, to have no share in His kingdom! Peter is frightened. "Lord, if it be so, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." The Saviour now instructs those timorous souls that are never satisfied with their past penances, their confessions and preparations. "Jesus saith to him: He that is washed needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly." Whosoever washes himself in the waters of baptism or in those of penance has no need to be purified save of those light stains unavoidable to human frailty. Then did the Son of God wash the feet of the chief of His apostles, leaving him bathed in tears, filled with divine love, his heart full of pure and sweet consolations. Such are the rewards of obedience.

From Peter, Jesus passes to the others. I see Him at the feet of Judas. This unfortunate man is unmoved by his Master's action and the sight of his own miserable soul. He coolly considers the Lord of lords prostrate before him, washing and wiping his feet. Such condescension and goodness do not soften his heart. Is not my own heart as hard as his? In what state do I see Jesus Christ upon our altars? Destitute of all beauty, deprived of the very form of His humanity, hiding Himself under ordinary appearances in order to become my Food, my Victim. When holy priests and pious laity contemplate Him in this state of annihilation, they are carried away by transports of love, they shed tears of devotion; but I hold Him in my hands, I receive Him, I possess Him in my heart, yet experience not the least feeling of tenderness! O Jesus, heal me of my insensibility if it be offensive to Thee and if it be merely sent for my confusion, grant me the grace to bear it with patience. Judas had just heard words which should have pierced His heart: "You are clean, but not all." The traitor can not doubt these words; it was to warn him that Jesus spoke in that manner, and how many other pressing solicitations of grace He used to make him examine his interior. It was all to no use. Expressions of mercy can not touch him. See to what an extent passion can debase the soul of an apostle.

After He had washed their feet, and taking His garments, being sat down again He said to them: "You know what I have done to you?" Many in the course of ages shall read what I have now done; many will hear it related, and they will not understand it; but do you at least, My beloved apostles, do you understand it? "You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I, then, being your Lord and Master, have washed your

feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." O humility, O charity, virtues so much recommended, so well practised by Jesus Christ, are you sufficiently prized by His disciples, nay by His very ministers? It suffices not to merely know you: your presence is to be made known by acts. "If you know these things, you shall be blessed if you do them." In this does happiness consist. "Blessed." Heaven is their price. How blessed in this very world is the priest of Jesus Christ, who humbles Himself with his Master, exercises zeal and charity with Him, immolates himself with Him for the glory of God and the salvation of his brethren. How pure the joys, how abundant the graces concealed under an exterior so modest, engaging, painstaking. This is a beautiful life! I shall realize it if I strive to unite sincere humility to ardent charity, never hesitating to lower myself to serve my God, whom I recognize in the person of my brethren.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons concerned. Jesus Christ. Conscious of His own greatness, He does not avail Himself of this, except to give more power to the lesson of humility which He is about to give. Consider the apostles. A sort of respectful curiosity is depicted in their countenances. Peter, troubled, confused, when he sees his Master about to wash his feet. Judas, somber, worried, hardened.

Second and Third Points.—Consider the actions, hear the words. Supper is over. Jesus rises, lays aside His garments. He comes to Simon Peter. Peter amazed, prostrates himself and exclaims: "Dost Thou wash my feet, O Lord?" "What I do thou dost not understand now, but thou shalt understand it hereafter." Let us leave the future to God and abandon ourselves to His Providence. In vain Peter continues to resist. His humility is overcome by that of Jesus Christ. From Peter, Jesus passes to the others; behold Him at the feet of Judas. What is the condition of my own heart after holy communion? Jesus having taken His garments, terminates the scene in this solemn language: "You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If, then, I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."

Holy Thursday.

MEDITATION XLVIII.

INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST AND OF THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD.

"As in the cenacle there is something more than a repast, so there is also something more than a sacrifice—there is the institution of the new priesthood. Our Saviour would not have said to men: 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you,' had He not thought of instituting a ministry through which He would renew to the end of time what He had now accomplished in presence of these twelve men. Now these are His words to these men whom He hath chosen: 'Do this in commemoration of Me.' By those words He gives power to them also to change the bread into His body, and the wine into His blood, and this sublime power shall be transmitted through holy ordination in the Church to the end of time. Through the ministry of mortal, sinful men, Jesus will continue to work out the miracle He performed in the cenacle, and while He endows His Church with the only one and immortal sacrifice, He gives us, according to His promise, through the bread of heaven, the means to abide in Him, and for Him to abide in us." (D. Gueranger, Ann. Liturg.)

These two institutions contain two powerful motives of gratitude. The first of these concerns all the laity: "Take and eat, this is My body . . . take and drink, this is My blood"; the second regards priests in particular: "Do this in commemoration of Me."

1.—*Love of Jesus Christ for me in the Institution of the Mysteries of this Day*—"This is My body."

2.—*Special Love of Jesus Christ for His Priests*—"Do this in commemoration of Me."

First Point.—Love of Jesus Christ for men in the institution of these mysteries. The Eucharist is the testament of the love of God, who is about to die; it is the last pledge of His tender love. What is the nature of this gift? To whom is it given? At what time, for what object? Let us confess it; infinite love

alone was capable of bestowing it. "Make His works known among the people." (Is. xii. 4.)

I. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Everything was ready, the hour had come in which he was to accomplish the great design formed by His heart. "And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread and blessed and broke, and gave to His disciples and said: Take ye and eat, this is My body. And taking the chalice He gave thanks, and gave to them saying: Drink ye all of this, for this is My blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins." (Matt. xxvi. 26.) Can I hear those words and not be filled with respect and enraptured with love?

"This is My body, this is My blood." What is it that Jesus Christ gives us? Something infinitely more than His kingdom. He gives Himself, His power, His goodness, His graces, His merits. The body crucified for us is incorporated with our body; the blood which has saved the word is mingled with our blood; our soul is united to that of the Redeemer. His divinity fills us and consumes all that had been corrupted by sin. The faithful Friend dwells within our bosom, and says to us: "Put Me as a seal upon thy heart." (Cant. viii. 6.) O man, seek and find, if you can, a good which is not contained in this priceless gift, and say if the love of Jesus for you has not made Him prodigal of Himself, since He thought it too little to give you all that He has, if He give you not also all that He is: *O Deum, si fas est dicere, prodigum sui prae desiderio hominis! An non prodigum, qui non solum sua sed seipsum impendit?* (Guer. in die Pent.)

II. But for whom is such an astonishing favor destined? Shall it be granted exclusively to the holy Virgin, to the apostles whom Jesus loved, to some chosen souls whose purity vies with that of Mary and St. John? Jesus grants it to all His disciples. *Deditque discipulis.* To all the children of His Church, at all times, in all places, to persons of all conditions. No one is excluded, unless he excludes himself; for after the accomplishment of this work, the abridgement of all His miracles, He commands His ministers to do what He has just done; to perpetuate this miracle of love, renewing it until the consummation of ages, in every place wherein any of His servants may be found. He has given Himself all to us in His excessive, His disinterested love.

III. What did He expect of men when He instituted the Eucharist? What were men preparing for Him at the very moment that His heart was, at it were, exhausting itself for them? It was the eve of His Passion, the night on which He was betrayed, when the Jews were deliberating on the means to make Him suffer an

infamous and cruel death, when Judas sought the occasion to betray Him. It was when men were most deserving of His indignation that His love for them reaches the height and limit of generosity. "He loved them unto the end." He sees the plots against Him. He sees the profanations of the future as well as the attacks of the present day; nothing can stop Him. "Many waters can not quench charity, neither can the floods drown it." (Cant. viii. 7.)

IV. Finally, He has no other aim in this institution of the Eucharist save to conquer excessive perversity by excessive goodness. Men reject Him. They will soon cry out: "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" He yields Himself a captive in the midst of them so that He may never part from them. By the enormity of their crimes, they would, it might seem, force Almighty God to strike them without mercy. He wishes, by a perpetual sacrifice, to place Himself between God and their crimes as a Victim of propitiation. They can not tolerate Him, yet He seems unable to separate Himself from them. He will only approach close enough to them when they shall have eaten His flesh and drank His blood. He wishes to be the nourishment of their souls—"I will comfort you"—to communicate to them His divine life, which will affect them also, and by virtue of which He shall raise them up at the Last Day. Such are the aims of His love in this mystery. To abide ever with men, to sacrifice Himself continually for them, to unite Himself to them as their food, so as to transform them into Him. In this manner does God accomplish magnificently in favor of His new people, what He had promised to their elders. "They shall come and give praise in Mount Sion." Behold the Church whose cradle was in Jerusalem. "And they shall flow together to the good things of the Lord, for the corn and wine . . . and their souls shall be as a watered garden, and they shall be hungry no more." Behold all the blessings of God contained in the Eucharist. "And I will fill the souls of the priests with fatness, and My people will be filled with My good things." (Jer. xxxi. 12, 14.)

Second Point.—Love of the Saviour for His ministers in the institution of the mysteries of this day. The Eucharist, which constitutes the riches of the Church, is the special treasure of the priesthood. *O quam magnum et honorabile est officium sacerdotum, quibus datum est Dominum majestatis verbis sacris consecrare, labiis benedicere, manibus tenere, ore proprio sumere et caeteris ministrare?* (Im. l. iv., ch. 11.) What a field opened to most holy reflection in those words: *Consecrare, benedicere, tenere, sumere ministrare?*

Over whom do we exercise so extensive a power? Over the Lord of all majesty. Was there ever a function so divine? How do you acquit yourself of it? With what interior recollection, with what piety do you pronounce the sacred words which render you like to the eternal Father begetting His Son, like to Jesus Christ reproducing and immolating Himself through your ministry? Do then, in commemoration of Him, the great thing which He did in the cenacle, and which He renews every day on the altar with so much love for you; for you are one of those to whom He said: "Do this in commemoration of Me." Whenever you celebrate the holy mysteries, hear Him repeating this sweet invitation. "Think of Me, O you whom I chose to be My representative, My friend, My consoler, another Myself. Many forget Me; you at least be mindful of My blessings; remember My immolation on Calvary." "As often as ye do those things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me."

Through the consecration, the Word incarnate, for our redemption, is present on the altar. There He is, under your eyes, destitute of motion, nay apparently of life, though He gives life to all that breathes. O Priest of God, what use do you make of Him? You offer Him for the living and for the dead, for yourself and the salvation of the whole world. Uniting yourself to the intentions which He had on the cross, and which He still has on the altar, you look up to heaven as He did in order to glorify God, to adore Him with the saints, to thank Him with them. You look down upon earth in order to sanctify it, by drawing down the graces which He decreed for men; you consider with compassion the suffering Church which you can console so efficaciously. How often in the course of the sacrifice do you bless Him from whom all benedictions flow? How often do you touch Him whom the angels can hardly contemplate? Then taking this heavenly Bread, you give it. *Ut sumant, et dent caeteris.* You dispose of Him as of a thing which is yours.

On this day honor with special devotion the Most Holy Sacrament and the sacred priesthood. Recall to mind the blessed moment on which you received powers so wonderful: *Accipe potestatem offerre sacrificium Deo, missasque celebrare, tam pro vivis quam pro defunctis, in nomine Domini.* Make use of this power with so much devotion and fervor that at the Last Day you may be one of those priests whom Jesus shall praise before the whole of mankind, because they will have duly venerated the mysteries of His body and blood: *Deus qui nobis sub sacramento mirabili, passionis tuae memoriam reliquisti; tribue, quaesumus, ita nos corporis et sanguinis tui sacra mysteria venerari, ut redemptionis*

tuae fructum in nobis jugiter sentiamus. Qui vivis et regnas in saecula saeculorum.

Spend with great recollection and fervor these three last days of the fast of Lent, and thus complete your preparation for the great solemnity of Easter: *Per immensam hanc charitatem tuam, Domine, peto gratiam efficacem, ad emendandos mores et honorificandum ministerium meum. Da mihi spiritum compunctionis, praesertim in hoc triduo sacro. Plorans nunc plorat sancta mater Ecclesia, et lacrymae in maxillis ejus. Pro aliis et prae aliis peccatoribus oportet me lugere ad pedem crucis tuae et implorare misericordiam tuam. Obsecro, te, bone Jesu, per amarissimam passionem tuam, ut me, meosque omnes, digneris facere participes infinitorum meritorum tuorum. Amen.* (Scut. Fid.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— Love of Jesus for men in the institution of the mysteries of this day. The Eucharist is a gift. What is its nature? To whom, when, and for what end is it given? What Jesus gives here is infinitely greater than His kingdom. He gave all that He had. He would give all that He is, divinity, humanity! On whom does He bestow the gift? To all the children of His Church, of all times, of all places, of all conditions. What time does He choose to accomplish this chief work of His loving heart? The very night on which He will be betrayed by Judas to His enemies, by His enemies to Pilate, who will give Him up to the executioners. Finally, what is His object? To conquer excess of perversity by excess of goodness. They will soon cry out: "Away with Him, away with Him!" and He makes Himself, as it were, a captive in chains in the midst of them. They can not tolerate Him. He can not separate Himself from them. Until the end of ages they shall have near them the tabernacle where He dwells, the altar on which He is immolated, the holy table on which He gives Himself as the nourishment of their souls.

Second Point.—Love of Jesus Christ for His ministers in the institution of the mysteries of this day. The Eucharist, which is the riches of the whole Church, is the special treasure of the priesthood. O Priest! *Quibus datum est Dominum majestatis verbis sacris consecrare, labiis benedicere, manibus tenere, ore proprio sumere et caeteris ministrare!* Was there ever a function so holy? How do you discharge its duties? On this day especially honor the Most Holy Sacrament and the sacred priesthood.

Holy Friday.

MEDITATION XLIX.

"ALL IS CONSUMMATED."

In your preparatory prayer offer to the adorable Trinity all the faculties of your soul, that they may be employed in His service during this day, but especially during this exercise. Let us offer to God the agony and the last breath of the Saviour. Never was God so glorified as on this day. Never is His heart so filled with compassion for the miseries of men as when we celebrate this sorrowful anniversary. Prayer on this day may obtain miracles; hence the Church in her desolation, understanding the power of her tears united to the blood of her divine Spouse, extends her maternal solicitude to all the wants of the whole human family. All men on this day, heretics, schismatics, Jews, have a share in the solemn supplications she addresses to God at the foot of the cross of His Son.

1.—*What is the Meaning of these Words on the Lips of the Dying Saviour?*

2.—*What shall be the Meaning of It on the Lips of the Just and of the Sinners at the Moment of their Death?*

First Point.—In the death of Jesus all is consummated, by the fulfillment of His Father's will, His own immolation, and His great work of the Redemption of men. I. All is consummated by the accomplishment of God's will regarding His Son when He sent Him into the world. What the Word at the time of His Incarnation had announced, "Behold I come, O Lord, to do Thy will." He declares, when dying, that all is accomplished. He has observed in every point the law which His Father had laid upon Him, and which He had lovingly accepted. The figures are realized, the prophecies are accomplished. There is not a circumstance of His nativity, of His life, and of His death, but fully conforms to what had been written of Him in the book of the eternal decrees. "In the head of the book it is written of Me that I should do Thy will, O God." In giving up His life amid so many sorrows, He may comfort Himself with the thought that He has fulfilled His mission in doing and suffering all that was in accordance with the divine will. "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." (John, xvii. 4.) "It is consummated."

O men, hear your Master! Look at Him, living and dying. Learn of Him how you ought to live, how you ought to die. Submit in everything to the will of God. If you will be His disciples, such ought to be your life and such your death. O Lord, am I justified in saying that hitherto I have been one of them? If I had to die this day, would I dare to call on heaven and earth to witness that I have accomplished Thy will, all Thy will, and fulfilled Thy views regarding my person? "I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do."

II. All is consummated as regards the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Jews can no longer outrage and torture Him. The hour of the power of darkness is over; the Passion is ended. The Son of God has drank to the very dregs the chalice prepared for Him. O Jesus, what sacrifice hast Thou consummated for my salvation? Enable me to measure its extent. My son, consider the state in which thou seest Me on this gibbet. My life is ebbing away with the last drops of My blood. Recall to mind the sufferings and reproaches I have had to undergo; remember the torture of My body, the sadness of My soul, the anguish of My heart. For love of thee and to obey My Father, I have sacrificed everything, My rest, My liberty, My honor, My life. I offer Myself as a holocaust. I do not complain that I gave too high a price to purchase thy eternal salvation, provided thou wilt respond to My love.

Thy charity, O Lord, urges me. On this day, when Thy heart showed itself so generous for me, I will also consummate the sacrifice of my whole self to Thy glory and the glory thoroughly of Thy Father. Often I began to offer it, but never accomplished it. At the foot of Thy cross on the day of Thy death it is impossible to refuse Thee anything; for Thee alone it is possible to live. "That they also, who live, may not now live for themselves, but unto Him who died for them." (2 Cor. v. 15.) *En servus tuus ego, paratus ad omnia, quoniam non desidero mihi vivere sed tibi; utinam digne et perfecte.* (Im. l. iii. ch. 15.)

III. For the Son of God all is consummated in regard to the work of our Redemption. The ransom of the captives is paid, sin is destroyed, the anger of God is appeased, grace has been acquired, the Church is founded, the priesthood and the sacraments are instituted. Let us understand the warnings of our dying God; it is consummated. "My part in the work of your salvation is accomplished. Now accomplish yours. You have My word to instruct you, My examples to direct you, My grace to assist you. If you employ rightly the means of sanctification which I leave you, you shall, with Me, attain your happiness."

O priest of God, how glorious the part assigned to you in the

work of the universal Redemption, since it is you who apply its benefit to souls. Consider those souls through the wounds of Jesus Christ. They shall then appear to you to be so precious that you will spare nothing in order to save them. You will say with St. Paul: "I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh." It suffices not that Christ has suffered in His divine flesh; He must suffer in His mystical body, of which the priests are the principal members: "For His body which is the Church." (Col. i. 24.)

Second Point.—At the moment of death everything shall be consummated for the sinner and for the just, but in quite a different manner. "It is consummated." A terrifying truth for the man who rebelled against grace during life, and at death is impenitent. For him all is consummated. Riches, pleasures, honors, all are past; projects, business, amusements, all are over; body, soul, mind, health, relatives, friends, all are lost. There is nothing left save his crimes, and the punishments which God will inflict for them. He dies, he enters an unknown region where he will find naught but a terrible judgment and an eternal hell.

"It is consummated." A reflection full of consolation for the faithful Christian, but especially for the good priest at the moment of his death. "All is consummated." I have fought according to my strength, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, I have loved the Church and served it, I die in its bosom; I have observed the law of God, and had no greater desire than to procure its observance by others. I have suffered and carried my cross after Jesus. Faults, indeed, I have committed, but I have cleansed myself in the blood of the Lamb, and I have endeavored to deserve mercy by multiplying works of mercy. If there remain some debts, my Saviour has made Himself my security; His satisfaction is mine the moment that I unite my sacrifice to His; from Him I expect the crown of justice. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; as to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice." (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.) Blessed is the death which is accompanied with sentiments of this kind. In order to be worthy, it suffices not to give one's self fervently to God; perseverance is necessary. When could we more surely obtain it than on this day, when God is, as it were, bound to subscribe to all our prayers?

O Jesus, be Thou my strength and my support, assist me during my whole life, and grant that at death I may repeat confidently the word of victory: "It is consummated." *Largire mihi donum perseverantiae finalis, et specialem hanc gratiam, ut indefesso studio de virtute ad virtutem progrediar, ut ardua vocationis meae negotia rite*

conficiam, et antequam moriar, sacro Viatico muniar ad cursum meum feliciter consummandum, ut in hora mortis meae aeternitas confidenter possim dicere: Consummatum est; nec aliud mihi restat, nisi undequaque beata. Amen. (Scut. Fid.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—In the death of Jesus all the designs of God are consummated. I. He has punctually observed the law which His Father laid upon Him, and which He so lovingly accepted. He may comfort Himself in the midst of His sorrows with the thought that He has faithfully accomplished His mission. If I had to die this day would my conscience permit me to say the same? All is consummated in the case of the immolation of the Saviour. O my Master, grant me to measure the extent of Thy sacrifice. I will, on this day, dedicate my whole person to Thy glory and the glory of Thy Father. Whoever lives can live now no longer but for Thee. II. All is consummated in the work of our Redemption. Hear Him saying to you: My part is accomplished; it remains to you, My disciples, to accomplish yours.

Second Point.—All shall be consummated for the sinner and for the just at the moment of their death. This is a truth terrifying for the man who has rebelled against grace in his life, and is impenitent at his death. Riches, pleasures, all are past; body, soul, health, hope, all are lost. O death truly frightful! But for the faithful priest "all is consummated." No more enemies to overcome, all combats ended. Nothing remains to be done save to receive from Thy hands the reward promised to fidelity. O my God, give me the grace to be able to repeat with confidence at my death this word of victory: "All is consummated!"

Holy Saturday.

MEDITATION L.

THE SEPULCHER OF JESUS CHRIST.

1.—*The Last of His Humiliations.*
2.—*The Beginning of His Glory.*
3.—*For Us a School of Perfection.*

First Point.—Jesus annihilated in His sepulcher. After His death He is taken down from the cross, and deposited for a few

moments in the arms of His inconsolable Mother. Next they give to this body the funeral honors bestowed on the remains of other mortals. For a God, these honors are the last degree of humiliation; and on this day we see fully justified this astonishing expression of St. Paul, "He debased Himself." (Phil. ii. 7.) Through the mystery of the Incarnation, God had, as it were, annihilated Himself in humanity, since man is nothing compared with God; but in the sepulcher the annihilation is more complete.

Let us not forget that this inanimate body is still the body of a God, that the divinity was never separated from it. During the Saviour's life, God lived and acted in it; through it He manifested His glory, by performing divine works. In the sepulcher there is a God-man destitute of life, destitute of action; a God-man in whom nothing of the Godhead appears, neither power, wisdom, empire over nature, nay, in whom nothing even of man's nature appears, as movement, speech, or feeling. Such is the state of God in the grave. Is it not the lowest stage of humiliation, the crowning, so to say, of annihilation? And of this we find no image, save in holy communion.

In this Sacrament not the divinity alone, but the humanity also has disappeared from sight, and in a manner still more striking than in the grave, for in the grave there was at least the exterior form of a human body. Let us adore this annihilation of Jesus Christ, which is new evidence of His love for us. If in the Holy Eucharist, He debased and concealed Himself to such an extent, it was only to impart to us the confidence that we needed to approach Him, to unite ourselves to Him so far as to eat His flesh and drink His blood. How blessed you are, O Priest of God, in having the privilege of burying Him every day in your heart, and preparing for Him in the souls of the faithful sepulchers wherein He is pleased to rest. Continue, O Priest of God, to purify consciences, place within the souls of men those virtues which by their perfume will embalm the body of the Saviour, and by their effects will also edify their neighbor. Be careful, however, to treat those holy mysteries in a worthy manner. From the arms of the cross, Joseph and Nicodemus received the divine body deprived of life. From heaven you receive it not only living, but giving life and immortality. *Bone Jesu, tribue mihi pauperi servo tuo necessaria virtutum ornamenta, velut aromata, ut digne te sepeliam in praecordiis meis. Dealba me et munda cor meum ab omni criminum macula, ut conscientia pura, tanquam in sindone munda te recipiam: et qui voluisti in monumento novo sepeliri, da mihi cor novum et spiritum novum, ut innovato quotidie pietatis ardore sacris operari valeam.* (Scut. Fid.)

Second Point.—The sepulcher of Jesus Christ the beginning of His glory. We can but recognize the designs of Providence in permitting that the entrance to the sepulcher should be closed by rolling against it a very heavy stone, that a guard should be set about it, and that it should be sealed with the seal of public authority. God desired that all those precautions should serve to establish the death and burial of His Son. He designed thereby to anticipate and to refute the story of the taking away of the body, and give the Resurrection an evidence of certainty which would triumph over the most obstinate incredulity. Behold here the accomplishment of the prophecy, "and His sepulcher shall be glorious." (Is. xi. 10.) Let the vanity of men extend to their tombs, let them engrave their names and their deeds in marble, this marble will proclaim that they are no more, that henceforth they will be but a handful of dust. Thou alone, O my Master, findest in Thy burial the beginning of the triumph which the Father had decreed for Thee. Humiliated in the sepulcher, Thou art glorified through the same. "Having become obedient unto death . . . wherefore also God exalted Him." Heaven and earth are about to rejoice at this triumph. Blessed are Thy true disciples and faithful servants; with Thee they shall share in it one day.

Third Point.—The grave of Jesus Christ is for us a school of perfection. It is of the adorable dead, rather than of the just Abel, that it should be said, "being dead He yet speaketh." (Heb. xi. 4.)

Let us gather up some of the lessons that Jesus gives us in this mystery. I. He dwells in darkness, He tells us to love the hidden life. He has already said so in the womb of His Mother, in the stable of Bethlehem, in the solitude of Nazareth; but He proclaims it still more energetically in the obscurity of His grave. The hidden life offers so many means for preserving one's innocence! It it so easy then to think of God, to walk in His presence! Is not this the means to become perfect? "Walk before Me and become perfect." (Gen. xvii. 1.)[1]

II. We admire the docility of Jesus as He obeys, and gives Himself up to those who have assumed the duty of His interment. How much more admirable the obedience He renders to His ministers in the Sacrament of His love, permitting them to

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[1] An interior soul will feel attracted on this day to meditate on this text of St. Paul to the Colossians: "You are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear who is your life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory." (Coloss. iii. 3, 4.)

dispose of Him as they choose, to raise Him up, to lower Him, to carry Him whithersoever they like. His apparent insensibility in the Eucharistic state causes me to envy the state of those souls which are really dead to the world and to themselves, insensible to anything save the interests of God. When shall I be able to say with as much truth as St. Paul, "The world is crucified to me, and I to the world"? (Gal. vi. 14.) III. The divinity, ever united to the body of Jesus Christ in the grave, preserves it from all corruption. Obliged as I am to live in the world in the midst of sinners, I stand in need, O my God, of a sort of a miracle to remain pure and entirely free from sin. This miracle Thou wilt perform if I strive to remain inseparably united to Thee, living by Thee and in Thee. IV. Finally, I see a great prodigy in the sepulcher of Jesus Christ, that He preserves therein His whole strength, so that He will shortly rise out of it triumphing over death in the very empire of death. This prodigy Thou workest also in Thy good priests, O Lord. Powerless of themselves, they receive power of Thee to overcome the most tyrannical passions, to overcome nature, and with Thee to enter the state of a blessed immortality. In this manner are accomplished the designs of Thy mercy. Thy goodness gave them grace to know the mysteries of the Incarnation of Thy Son, to honor His mysteries, to observe His precepts, to imitate His examples. And then, by His Passion and cross, Thou leadest them to the glory of His Resurrection: *Gratiam tuam, quaesumus, Domine, mentibus nostris infunde; ut qui . . . Christi Filii tui incarnationem cognovimus, per Passionem ejus et crucem ad resurrectionis gloriam perducamur.*

In ending to-day the forty days' fast of Lent, recall to your mind what you have done during this blessed season, for God, for your neighbor, for yourself, and what more you could have done. Offer as a satisfaction for your faults all the sufferings and humiliations of Jesus Christ, and dispose yourself to celebrate worthily the feast of Easter, which St. Gregory calls the "solemnity of solemnities, because it lifts us up from earth and takes us up to heaven, enabling us to enjoy it even now by faith, hope, and charity." (Hom. 23, in Evan.)

Nunc autem in hoc ultimo quadragesimalis jejunii die, supplico tibi, bone Jesu, ut omnia poenitentiae opera benigne suscipias, quae huc usque peregi, tibique jam denuo humiliter offero. Haud equidem dignus sum laetitia paschali, quia quadragenariam hanc abstinentiam minus accurate servavi, nec corpus meum ad Ecclesiae praescriptum satis severe maceravi. Condona mihi negligentias meas per merita amarissimae Passionis tuae. Dirige me meosque omnes, ut tandem,

emenso peregrinationis nostrae itinere, ad aeternam caelestis patriae festivivitatem pervenire mereamur. Amen. (Scut. Fid.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The sepulcher, the lowest humiliation of Jesus Christ. We can not imagine a greater humiliation for God. Holy communion, however, is its counterpart. In this Sacrament not only the Godhead but the humanity have disappeared from sight, and in one sense more fully than in the burial; for in the sepulcher, at least, is seen the exterior form of a human body. In lowering Himself in the Eucharist, He wished to inspire us with the confidence which we needed to eat His flesh and to drink His blood. Let us prepare for Him a sepulcher in our hearts wherein He may love to dwell. Joseph and Nicodemus received the divine body deprived of life; we receive Him living, and imparting immortality.

Second Point.—Annihilation of Jesus Christ in the grave the beginning of His glory. The death and burial of Our Lord having been legally established, and this with extraordinary care and precaution, it follows that the fact of the Resurrection is evident. Here we have the prediction accomplished, that "His sepulcher shall be glorious." O Jesus, most deeply humiliated in the grave, from this very grave Thy glory will emanate!

Third Point.—The grave of Jesus Christ is for us a school of perfection. I. From the darkness wherewith He surrounds Himself, He teaches us to love the hidden life. It is so favorable to innocence, to progress in virtue. II. It is a beautiful model of obedience. Still more admirable is the obedience He yields to the priest, who disposes of Him as he chooses. III. The body was proof against corruption, because it was united to the divinity. Thou, O Lord, wilt make me incorruptible in the midst of the world if I remain constantly united to Thee by charity. IV. Jesus in the grave preserves all His strength, and I, through my union with Thee, will receive power to overcome passions and hell. Like Thee, through the cross, I will rise glorious from the grave.

Easter Day.

MEDITATION LI.

THE RESURRECTION. CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons Concerned.*
2.—*Hear their Words.*
3.—*Consider their Actions.*

Haec dies quam fecit Dominus. Alleluia. Of all the days, this is the one to which Our Lord has imparted the most splendor. There is no other day so glorious for Himself, so full of benefits for us; the miracle of the Resurrection confirms all the miracles performed by Jesus Christ. God will now receive due honor on earth, and man will be saved. We should, therefore, yield to feelings of joy. This joy, however, should be pure and holy like its object. *Exultemus et laetemur in ea.*

First Prelude.—Mary Magdalen and her companions went early in the morning to visit the grave. A great earthquake was felt. The angel of the Lord, having rolled back the stone which closed the entrance to the sepulcher, was seated upon it. At this sight the guards were astounded, and were paralyzed with fear. He quieted the holy women, and after convincing them that the Saviour had risen, told them to go, and announce the fact to His disciples. (Matt. xxviii., Mark, xvi., Luke, xxiv., John, xx.)

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the place of the burial, the open grave, the great excitement among the disciples, the holy women going to and returning from the sepulcher.

Third Prelude.—O Jesus, victorious over death and hell, I rejoice at Thy joy, I applaud Thy triumph; the glory of the head reflects on the members. Grant that I may rise with Thee, by leaving to-day the grave of my illusions and all my spiritual infirmities.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. The angel. His countenance is as lightning for the enemies of Jesus, but most kind for those who love Him. His garment possesses the whiteness of snow; it is the symbol of the pure life of a risen soul. The holy women hurrying to the grave: *Valde diluculo.* Let us remember the warning which the Church gave us during Lent:

Non sit vobis vanum mane surgere ante lucem: quia promisit Dominus coronam vigilantibus. They knew that it was guarded by armed men, that a heavy stone closed its entrance. They do not slacken their steps on this account. They indeed ask one another: "Who will roll back the stone?" But they persevere in their purpose. What is it that stimulates and sustains their courage? And what is it that makes me so timid and inactive? Why does the least obstacle frighten me when there is question of undertaking something for the glory of God? Oh, if I had the same love! Consider now the chief priests, and all those who abetted the death of Jesus Christ. See in their countenances mingled sentiments of wonder, fear, and anger while they listen to the story of the affrighted and trembling soldiers. The cause of joy to the good is the cause of terror to the wicked. Must not Caiaphas be afraid lest the risen Christ appear to him, to reproach him for his injustice and hypocrisy? Is not Herod annoyed when he remembers that he treated as a fool Him who has now triumphed over death? when he thinks of the white garment of ignominy? Is not Pilate ashamed of the base cowardice which made him forsake One whose innocence he had proclaimed, and whose innocence is now divinely proved? What is the emotion of all Jerusalem at such an event, at the sight of the dead risen from their graves, who reveal their identity to a great number of persons? (Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.) Consider the disciples and the apostles; they were sad at first, because they were incredulous. When they heard of the Resurrection of the Saviour, their first impression was one of terror. (Luke, xxiv. 22.) They think their enemies have stolen the body and will accuse the apostles of the theft, in order to obtain the opportunity to treat them as their Master had been treated. They meet one another with troubled, downcast countenances. But their doubts disappear as the light of truth enters their souls, their faces brighten up, their hearts expand with delight. Finally, contemplate Jesus Christ in His new state. How sweet His majesty, how divine His beauty! Do you recognize Him who excited so much compassion in you in the pretorium and on the cross? See in His glory a pledge of the reward which awaits you if you remain faithful.

Second Point.—Hear the words. Hear the words of the angel calming the holy women, inviting them to enter the sepulcher. There remained nothing to claim reverence except the sacred linen. "Fear not," he says to them, I know what motives lead you to this spot, I know what you desire. Only the enemies of Christ need tremble; you love Him. Be calm and confident. "You seek the Saviour who was crucified. He is not here; He is

risen, as He had foretold. Draw near, behold the place where they laid Him." "He is risen!" What a sound of triumph in those words! How it will re-echo through the universe! How many tongues will repeat it, with joyous "alleluia!" Hear the story of Magdalen, of her companions, of the disciples who were the first to see the Saviour in His glorified state! The truth is accompanied by a joy, the greater because they had for so long a time refused to give it credence. Hear the astounded chief priests; they teach the guards the rôle they will have to play to deceive the public concerning an event which covers them with shame, and draws down upon them the execration of all men. "Say that the disciples came during the night, and took away the body while you were asleep." Yes! give as witnesses men who were asleep and who nevertheless saw and heard what was passing during their sleep! O human wisdom, how surprisingly foolish, when contending against God, or striving to put an obstacle to His designs!

Third Point.—Consider the actions. What does Jesus Christ do? He magnificently completes the important work for which He had come down on earth. By His death He had atoned for our sins. By His Resurrection He justifies us. He was "delivered up for our sins and rose again for our justification." (Rom. iv. 25.) He justifies our faith, our hope, our love; our faith, for this miracle confirms all the others and seals His doctrine with the seal of infallibility; our hope, for He gives us in His triumph the pledge of a similar triumph which it is our power to obtain if we are so disposed; our love, since we know, through this stupendous miracle, who He is who humbled Himself and suffered so much for us.

What is the conduct of the apostles? They tremble, they hide, they refuse to believe. Some of them obstinately refuse to give credence to an event which they must have expected, since they adored Him who had so often and so clearly predicted it to them. They teach us by their timidity and their disposition to incredulity, how much need we have of grace in order to believe; later on they will prove to us, by their labors and sufferings, what wonderful things this same faith can enable us to perform.

What is the conduct of the enemies of Our Saviour? They close their eyes to the light. After hearing the deposition of the soldiers they could entertain no doubt concerning the Resurrection of the Saviour, no doubt of His divinity. They had exclaimed: "If He is the Son of God, let God come and deliver Him." God has delivered Him, not only out of their hands but also from the hands of death. Of this the soldiers appointed to guard the sepulcher are the unimpeachable witnesses. They

would avow their crime by their negligence. They impart to the truth of the miracle a more striking certainty by aiming at suppressing it.

Colloquy with Jesus Christ risen from the dead. Congratulate Him on His glorious triumph, and make His victory yours. Our beloved Chieftain gained this triumph for His members as well as for Himself. Ask Him to grant you spiritual joy and grace to enter this new life which should be the principal fruit of this mystery. (Rom. vi. 4.) Participate in the happiness of Mary, who in a manner rises in the person of her divine Son. *Regina coeli, laetare.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— Contemplate the persons. The angel whose aspect inspires terror in the enemies of Christ, and gladness and confidence in His friends. The holy women going in haste to the sepulcher; neither the thought of the weighty stone nor the presence of the guards can shake their confidence. The chief priests and the other persecutors of Jesus Christ. What are the feelings of Caiaphas, of Herod, of Pilate? The disciples. In the first place they are sad, because they are incredulous; but in proportion as faith enters their soul they become full of joy.

Finally, Jesus Christ in His new state. Do you recognize Him whose sight on the cross inspired you with so much compassion?

Second Point.— Hear the words. Those of the angel, who reassures the holy women. Fear not, terror is for the enemies of Christ alone. He is risen. Hear the words of the chief priests bribing the guards to say that His disciples came during the night and took away the body while they slept. Consider the remarkable folly of human wisdom.

Third Point.—Consider the actions. What is the conduct of Jesus Christ? He completes His great work in a glorious manner. He justifies our faith, our hope, and our love. What is the conduct of the disciples? They tremble, they hide. By their incredulity they show us that we have absolute need of grace in order to believe; later on they will prove how faith can strengthen us. What is the conduct of the enemies of Christ? They close their eyes, they give the truth of Resurrection the most splendid evidence of certainty, precisely by plotting to suppress it.

MEDITATION LII.

GLORY OF JESUS CHRIST IN HIS RESURRECTION.

All in the person of Jesus Christ, His body, His soul, His divinity had been, as it were, annihilated by the ignominies and sufferings of His Passion. In His Resurrection everything is repaired.

1.—*Glory of His Soul.*
2.—*Glory of His Body.*
3.—*Glory of His Divinity.*

First Point.—The soul of Jesus Christ glorified in His Resurrection. We beheld this soul in the Garden of Olives and on the cross, plunged in an abyss of sadness and desolation. On this day it comes victoriously out of Limbo. When in the garden it had asked for the removal of the bitter cup; it needed support and strengthening from an angel; but to-day it spreads around it consolation and happiness. See with how much joy it inundated the hearts of the just in Limbo, who were there sighing for the day on which heaven should be opened to them. Our Saviour's soul comes to tell them that the day is near at hand, that the Redemption is accomplished. Many of them accompany it, when the soul returns to be reunited to its body. Through their own resurrection, they will be the first witnesses of the Saviour's Resurrection. It shows them the sacred body, haggard, covered with wounds, stretched in the grave. How tender their compassion, their gratitude, their love, when they consider those deep, countless wounds, which reveal the extent of the sufferings of the Son of God for their redemption. We can easily imagine them exclaiming at this sight: "So much dost Thou love me, O Lord, that Thou seemest to have nothing but hatred for Thyself." (St. Bonav.)

Now the blessed soul is reunited to its body. It rejoices exceedingly at its ability to reward it for all its sacrifices, and to procure for it more splendor and delight than it brought abuses and torments: *Resurrectionis gloria sepelivit morientis injuriam.* (St. Chrys. serm. 75.) God exacts humiliation only with a view to future elevation. Do thou then, O my soul, accept all the humiliations He is pleased to send thee during the time of thy exile on earth; be willing to be buried in darkness, despised, placed below all others; the day of thy glory will come.

Second Point.—The body of Jesus Christ glorified in His Resurrection. This sacred body had been "bruised" for our sins. (Is.) Under the bruises which disfigured it could any have recognized the most beautiful among the sons of men? But in the Resurrection it has been marvelously transformed. Not only is it freed from the laws of mortality and suffering; it is, moreover, adorned, in an incomparable degree, with all the prerogatives of glorified bodies. Its wounds are changed into sources of light. They lend it a splendor which infinitely surpasess that which will be granted any other body. The angels adored their King at His entrance into this world; to-day they adore Him with increased transports, when they see Him come to life from the embrace of death. Why should they not sing the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* around His sepulcher as they had done around His manger? Why should not the patriarchs, the prophets, all the just, repeat in concert the canticle revealed to St. John: "The lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity, and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory and benediction"? (Apoc. v. 12.)

The Son of God, announcing this triumph through the Royal Prophet, had expressed His deep gratitude to His Father, who was to crown Him with such everlasting glory. "Thou hast brought forth, O Lord, My soul from hell. Thou hast saved Me from those who go down into the pit. . . . In the evening weeping shall have place, and in the morning gladness. . . . Thou hast turned for Me My mourning into joy. Thou hast cut My sackcloth, and hast compassed Me with gladness, to the end that My glory may sing to Thee." (Ps. xxix.)

How good a Master is God, how generously He rewards all that is done or suffered to serve Him. Jesus Christ died and rose again, showing us in His Passion what we should now suffer for truth, and showing in His Resurrection what we must hope from it in eternity. (St. Aug.) We weep during the night of this sorrowful life; in the morning, however, at the first rays of the eternal day, the mourning will be turned into joy, and this joy will be without any sorrow. It will be pure and abundant. It will last during eternity, while the afflictions of this life are short and light, our tears themselves being sweetened by the hope of reward. This is the place to learn the nature of our self-love. Alas, by refusing to bear the mortification of Jesus Christ in my body, I deprive it of immense glory and incomprehensible delights in eternity.

Third Point.—The Saviour's divinity glorified in His Resurrection. It is, as it were, the sun coming out of the cloud, displaying the splendor of its rays. During the Passion the divinity

of Jesus Christ had been, as it were, eclipsed. A few circumstances in the midst of many insults and ill-treatments had indicated that He was more than man; on the other hand, however, who was ever so unlike a God as He who was condemned, scourged as a slave, and who expired on a gibbet between two criminals? His supreme greatness begins to appear in this miraculous rising from the grave, for He rises by His own power, showing the absolute empire He exercises over life and death. He comes out of the sepulcher without disturbing the stone placed at its entrance, as He had come out of His holy Mother's womb, without violating the seal of her virginity. He comes from the grave as Joseph out of prison, to command a whole nation, to communicate to his brothers a share of his happiness and glory; like Moses out of the waters of the Nile to become the saviour of his people; like Daniel out of the lion's den to be raised above the envious men who had plotted his death. He comes out of the sepulcher victor over hell and sin, and after breaking asunder the chains of death, He changes His weakness into power, His mortality into immortality, His many humiliations into glory and honor. (St. Leo. serm. 11, de ascens, Dom.)

O Priest of God, rise out of the grave of your imperfections. It should also be said of you on this day: "He is risen, he is not here." He is no longer a slave to indifference and to that negligence which he carried to the very altar. He is no longer inattentive to the presence of God, thoughtless, lacking in reserve, uneven in his temper. What a happy change has taken place in him!

Go to the altar and receive Him who is the resurrection and the life. When you will contemplate this glorious body more resplendent than the sun in the sanctuary of your heart, adore, return thanks and pray. Bring to this action the joy which love and confidence inspire. The phrase *Victimae paschali* is a pious and ingenuous expression of the sentiments which the mystery of the Resurrection inspires to the Church, and which she desires to inspire to her children. It would be useful to recite it according to the third manner of praying suggested by St. Ignatius.[1]

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point. —The soul of Jesus Christ glorified in its Resurrection. It comes out of Limbo joyful and triumphant; it has just announced to the just of the Old Testament that the Redemption

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[1] See the introduction.

has been accomplished. The soul once more united to the body, a transformation takes place, a marvelous splendor is communicated, the body's past sufferings rewarded by ineffable delights. Accept, O my soul, all the humiliations which God will send thee; the day of thy glory is at hand.

Second Point.—The body of Jesus Christ glorified in its Resurrection. Its wounds are changed into sources of light. Its beauty infinitely surpasses the glory which will be imparted to the bodies of the elect. Let us be comforted in our sorrows. We have to weep during the night of this life; but in the morning, when the first rays of the blessed eternity will appear, sadness will give way to incomprehensible joy.

Third Point.—The divinity of Jesus Christ glorified in His Resurrection. It had been, as it were, eclipsed during the Passion; it comes from the cloud more radiant. It is Joseph passing from an obscure prison to the first dignity of Egypt, Moses saved from the waters to become the saviour of his people. Let us also come out of the grave of our imperfections, and walk in the saintliness of a new sacerdotal life.

MEDITATION LIII.

MAGDALEN AT THE GRAVE OF OUR LORD.

1.—*She Seeks.*
2.—*She Finds.*
3.—*She Announces Jesus Christ.*

First Point.—Magdalen seeks Jesus Christ with all the eagerness, the solicitude, the energy, and constancy of true love.

I. Eagerness of her love. After a night which to her seemed endless, very early in the morning she wakes up her companions and starts on her journey. She is impatient to venerate the mortal remains of Him for whose loss she is inconsolable. She walks rapidly—and yet what does she expect to find in the grave? The body of her Master, in a condition which will renew all her sorrows. O my soul, shouldst not thou go with greater eagerness to the holy table, at which the same divine body will be given thee in the state of its glorified life?

II. Solicitude, anxiety of love. "But Mary stood at the sepulcher without, weeping; now as she was weeping, she stooped and looked into the sepulcher." (John, xx. 11.) The disciples have withdrawn, the other holy women have followed their example;

Magdalen alone does not retire. She has looked into the sepulcher many times; again she looks into it: *Amanti semel aspexisse non sufficit, quia vis amoris intentionem multiplicat inquisitionis.* (St. Greg. hom. 25 in Evan.) Love is never satisfied except when it has found what it sought. "And she saw two angels in white, sitting.... They say to her, woman, why weepest thou? She says to them, because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." (Ibid.) She sees two angels, but is neither frightened nor surprised. She does not notice the dazzling whiteness of their garments. She hears them, she answers them, but never loses sight of the object of her search. She listens to them, she speaks to them, to learn from them where Jesus is, ready at once to quit the angels and to go to the gardener, in the hope of finding some clue. Quite unconcerned about all the rest, she had but one desire, to find Jesus. This desire controls her so far that she scarcely heeds her own words: "If thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him." Of whom does she speak? She thinks that every one must know the facts concerning her Saviour.

III. Strength and constancy of love. Nothing can shake her determination. How is it that she lingers in a place so full of sad memories for her, especially since she has ascertained that the body of her Master is no longer there? *Plus affectat quam salet; de impossibilitate non causatur, quia cuncta, sibi posse et licere arbitratur.* (Im. l. iii, ch. 5.) Is it thus, O my God, that I desire, that I seek, that I love Thee?

Second Point.—Magdalen finds Jesus. He is often near us, and we fancy Him to be far off. It was Jesus Himself who now spoke to His servant, and asked her the cause of her tears. "Jesus says to her, woman, why weepest thou?" He knows full well the cause of her tears. Our affliction is pleasing to Him when our love of Him is its cause. If He conceals His presence from us and leaves us for some time in desolation, it is for the purpose of adding to our merit, of adding more sweetness to future joy.

The love of Magdalen induced her to forget her weakness, to disregard all dangers; her unshaken hope brooks no disappointment. Jesus rewards her by opening her eyes, and manifesting Himself to her even before He appeared to any of the disciples. "Jesus says to her, Mary! She, turning, says to Him, Rabboni!" The whole scene is enacted in two words, one from Jesus, the other from Mary, but there were wonders in those two words. How much grace, how much light accompanies the word of Jesus. What transport of holy love was expressed by the word Mary. Mary! This suffices for Jesus to make Himself known. My Master!

This suffices for Mary to enable Jesus to understand that she knows Him. What goodness and tenderness in the heart of Jesus when He pronounces the word Mary. What rapture and gratitude in the heart of Mary when she cries out Rabboni! A deep sadness had taken possession of, and, as it were, absorbed all the faculties of her soul; in a moment her Master's voice has scattered all the clouds, and filled her with heavenly consolation. O Jesus, grant that I may hear that intimate word of Thy heart, which fills the human heart with light and consolation. I will make myself less unworthy of this happiness by closing my ear to the tumults of earth, to hear Thee alone; by seeking Thee with Magdalen and seeking Thee alone.

Third Point.—Magdalen announces the Resurrection of Jesus. Her good Master had said to her: Do not touch Me. Wait until another time to give Me sensible signs of thy veneration. I am not yet about to leave earth to return to heaven; thou shalt have the opportunity to see Me again. Go thou to My brethren; it is time to put an end to their sorrow. Make haste and announce to them My Resurrection. How touching this solicitude! But who are they whom Jesus hastens to console, and whom He calls His brethren? What have they done to deserve so much kindness?

Magdalen went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and related to them His words. She exultingly spoke to them of His glorious state. She and her companions did everything to convince them of the truth of the news, which should have caused them so much joy. All to no purpose.

"These words seemed to them as idle tales." (Luke, xxiv.) They had believed Magdalen when she expressed a simple suspicion concerning a fact which she had imagined; they refuse to believe her when she relates what she had seen with her own eyes, and heard with her ears. O the hardness of the heart of man for things concerning salvation. A story makes an impression upon us; the truths of faith, grounded upon the authority of God Himself, can scarcely overcome the obstinacy of our mind. Let us humble ourselves, and at the same time rejoice, since the Lord lends such a kindly ear to our miseries. Following the example of Mary Magdalen, let us not hesitate to leave Jesus to assist our brethren. In serving them, we serve Jesus Himself, and He will not forget our zeal.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Magdalen seeks Jesus. I. Eagerness of her love. She starts early in the morning. She walks rapidly; what does

she hope to find? O my soul, thou shouldst be more eager to approach the holy table. II. The solicitude of her love. The disciples have withdrawn. She can not bring herself to abandon the spot. She had already looked many times into the sepulcher; she looks into it again. Unconcerned by the presence of the angels who speak, she listens to them, simply with a view to learn where the Saviour is. Her language betrays her anxiety: "Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him." She thinks that every one knows of whom she speaks. III. Power of her love. Nothing can shake her courage. Love attempts to do more than is possible to it. Is it thus, O my God, that I seek Thee? Do I love Thee as Magdalen loved Thee?

Second Point.—Magdalen finds Jesus. Her hope has been firm; her expectation will not be disappointed. Mary!—Good Master! Everything is made clear by those two words. O Jesus, grant that I may hear that intimate word of Thy heart, which enraptures the soul with holy delight.

Third Point.—Magdalen announces the apparition of Jesus. By His command she goes to the disciples. How exultingly she speaks to them of what she has seen and heard. She strives to convince them of the truth of her relation. In vain. They imagine that she relates a dream. Let us not hesitate, after the example of Magdalen, to leave Jesus, to assist our brethren. Let us not be surprised when contradictions come, whatever may be their cause or their occasion.

MEDITATION LIV.

JESUS APPEARS TO THE TWO DISCIPLES ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS.

1.—*He Joins Them.*
2.—*He Converses with Them.*
3.—*He Separates from Them.*

First Point.—Jesus joins the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. Everything breathes touching kindness, active sympathy, and humble zeal in the conduct of Jesus Christ toward these two disciples, to whom He shows Himself, and whom He desires to go and prepare the apostles, assembled together in Jerusalem, to receive the same favor.

Full of sadness they go out of Jerusalem the very day of the

Resurrection, seeking some diversion for their sorrow: *Convertuntur ad sensualia, qui expectare debebant divina.* (Avanc.) They were imprudent sheep wandering from the flock, exposing themselves to danger. Their faith had already grown weak. They had rejected the testimony of the holy women and of the apostles who, having visited the grave, had found it empty and declared that the Saviour had risen. Hence they now simply call Him a prophet. They had nearly lost hope. "We hoped." Fortunately they continued to love Him to some extent, and they conversed about Him. "They talked together of all the things that had happened. . . . of Jesus of Nazareth." How good it is to speak of God or the things of God, either to ourselves or with others. When we speak of God in our perplexities and troubles, He comes to us at once, giving us life and strength, and filling our hearts with His sacred love.

Notice with what kindness and humility Jesus hastens to help those who showed so little loyalty in the time of temptation. He is about to put an end to their affliction, though this is due to their own incredulity. These two men were not apostles, but disciples. He approaches them, walks and converses familiarly with them, as if He were one of them. He unveils His mysteries to these two just as He would to a multitude, as He had done at the well of Jacob, when the Samaritan woman alone could hear Him. Pastors of souls, behold your Model! Hasten to seek the sheep which go astray, approach those sinners who will be lost if your charity does not prevent their ruin. Go with them; make them open their hearts to you; you may, in this manner, bring about their salvation. Be not one of those who care to address none but large audiences, and who, according to St. Bonaventure, *nolunt ampullosa verba sua spargere inter paucos.*

Second Point.—Conversation of Jesus with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Admire the wise deference with which He prepares them for the grace He is about to grant them. He begins by questioning them. "What are those discourses that you hold one with another as you walk, and are sad?" The questions which a God propounds can not teach Him anything. Jesus knew the subject of their conversation, the cause of their sadness; but He desired to make them open their hearts, and to discover to Him the secret cause of their infidelity. The disciples did so. He immediately begins to instruct them, waking their attention by reproaching them as He had already done in the course of His instructions. "O foolish and slow of heart, to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into His glory?" He then

expounded to them that which concerns Him in all the Scriptures, showing the perfect similarity of the prophecies with the events which had just transpired. While enlightening their minds, He warmed their hearts and kindled them with heavenly fervor. They will soon say to one another: "Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke in the way?" (Luke, xxiv.)

O disciples, you were well inspired when coming out of Jerusalem; you spoke of Jesus and His sufferings. He of whom you spoke joined your company, spoke to you Himself, and at His voice the darkness of your soul gave way to light, your sadness to joy, your despondency to confidence and love. Do we deserve that Our Saviour should thus come and participate in our conversations? How many priests would have to blush were He, in certain circumstances, to appear to them on a sudden and ask them, "What are these discourses that you hold one with another?" What of those railleries, those disputes, those levities, those indiscreet words? Are these conversations becoming My representatives, men of God, priests who have celebrated the holy mysteries, and whose lips are yet empurpled with My blood? *Ex ore sacerdotis nihil nisi sanctum, nihil nisi honestum et utile procedere debet verbum, qui tam saepe Christi accipit sacramentum.* (Imit. l. iv, ch. 11.)

Third Point.—Jesus leaves the two disciples. Time passed rapidly while He was speaking. "They drew nigh to the town whither they were going; and He pretended to wish to go farther." Such at times is the conduct of God toward His servants; He seems to move away from us, in order to attract us; He conceals His favors to fill us with desires for them. As a tender father He seems to withdraw Himself from the children whom He cherishes, to increase their love, and to preserve it from growing cold. "But they constrained Him saying: Stay with us because it is toward evening." Great is the power of importunate prayer. It constrains God to stay with us, and to grant us our requests. "And He went in with them." "And it came to pass as He was at table with them, that He took bread and blessed and broke and gave to them; and their eyes were opened, and they knew Him." This was a delightful moment, but it was a moment only. "And He vanished out of their sight." What were their feelings then? Delightful is the peace which dwells in a soul to which Jesus has spoken, and which He has enabled to taste the truth of His mysteries.

We double our joys by sharing them with those whom we love. "Rising up the same hour they went back to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven gathered together . . . and they told them what

things were done in the way, and how they knew Him in the breaking of bread." When Jesus lavishes His graces upon us, it is generally to excite us to win hearts to Him.

"They truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread, whose heart burneth so mightily within them, from Jesus walking with them. Such affection and devotion as this, so vehement a love and burning, is often far from me." (Im. l. iv, ch. 14.) Endeavor to discover its cause. Is it not because your faith is languishing, or because various distractions, not quite involuntary, cause you to forget God? Attend Him, and Him alone, and you will soon, like the two disciples, find your heart burning within you. There is no ill that will not melt away if exposed to the burning and continual rays of this sun.

Go to the altar to break the heavenly bread, and during the sacrifice beseech Jesus Christ to open your eyes. In your thanksgiving, you might address to Him this admirable prayer of St. Anselm: *Amabilissime Jesu, da mihi ut diligan te semper, quantum possum et debeo, ut tu solus sis meditatio mea. Sine cessatione te sentiat cor meum, te alloquatur spiritus meus, tecum et de te fabuletur mens mea. Fac me rerum transeuntium oblivisci, prae magnitudine amoris tui. Bone Jesu, reple cor meum inextinguibili delectione tui, ac continua recordatione tui. Dulcis Christe, Deus meus, accende me totum igne tuo, ut totus dulcedine amoris tui plenus, totus flamma caritatis succensus, diligam te Dominum meum ex toto corde meo, totisque medullis praecordiorum meorum, habens te in corde, in ore, ac prae oculis meis semper et ubique.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— Jesus joins the disciples who go to Emmaus. They leave Jerusalem to seek relief for their sorrow. They were incautious sheep wandering from the flock. Their faith was much weakened. They now give the Saviour no appellation but that of prophet, and their hope is nearly gone. "We hoped." Our Lord hastens to meet them. He approaches them; He walks and converses familiarly with them. To two disciples He will unveil the mysteries, as He had done on a former occasion to the one woman of Samaria. Let us imitate the zeal and humility of our Model.

Second Point.—Jesus converses with the two disciples. He begins by questioning them, that they may uncover to Him the wound of their infidelity. He instructs them, showing how the prophecies agree with the events that have been accomplished. While enlightening their minds He imparts a sacred warmth to

their hearts. How well they had been inspired in taking the Saviour and His sufferings for the subject of their conversation! How many priests would have to blush for shame if the Saviour, appearing to them under certain circumstances, were to ask them, "What are these discourses which you hold?" Let us never forget what kind of language should be that of the priest.

Third Point.— Jesus vanishes from their sight. They had arrived at the town and He made as though He would go on, but they urged Him to stay. Here we see the power of prayer. It constrains God to stay with us, and, as it were, to grant our requests. He went in with them, and at the breaking of the bread, their eyes are opened; they recognize Him. But He has already vanished. Consoling visits like this are so short, but how sweet the peace they leave in the soul. The two disciples think of nothing but of making known their happiness to others.

MEDITATION LV.

APPARITION OF JESUS TO THE APOSTLES— CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons Concerned.*
2.—*Hear their Words.*
3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—"Now when it was late that same day (of the Resurrection) the first of the week, and the doors were shut where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said to them, Peace be to you . . . and He showed them His hands and His side. . . . The disciples, therefore, were glad when they saw the Lord." (John, xx.)

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the place in which the apostles were assembled together.[1]

Third Prelude.—Pray to the Lord to manifest Himself to you in the sanctuary of your heart, and to inspire you with the

[1] It is commonly believed that it was the cenacle, wherein the apostles had continued to take their meals together since the evening of the Last Supper. Many think that the apostles alone were present there when Jesus appeared. St. Bonaventure says that the most Blessed Virgin, the two disciples of Emmaus, and Mary Magdalen were there.

same sentiments which this apparition excited in the hearts of the apostles.

First Point.— Contemplate the persons mentioned. There were in this apartment the whole of the apostolical college, Thomas alone being absent. How many tears did he not afterwards shed on account of his absence from this reunion! Study the countenances of all those present. They are divided in opinion. Some believe in the Resurrection, others do not; but even those who admit its reality remain under the influence of fear. "For fear of the Jews." All appear to be troubled and anxious. O my God, if I had a lively faith and a firm hope, I should not be fearful in presence of Thy enemies. What can they do to me if Thou art my protector? These men; so timid to-day, will soon be proof against all fear; astonishing the world by their intrepidity. Strengthen me, O Lord, through the grace of Thy spirit. Consider the two disciples of Emmaus, entering suddenly. They hasten to relate what happened on the road, and in what manner they knew the Lord. They speak with the conviction of persons who both saw and heard; but alas, while their statement confirms the faith of some, it does not overcome the obstinacy of the others, who persevere in their incredulity. Contemplate Jesus Christ, at the moment of His apparition. His countenance expresses infinite goodness and meekness. Rays of light shoot forth from His sacred wounds. He appears at the same time so affable, so full of majesty. In your many and familiar relations with Him, never separate reverence from confidence, nor confidence from reverence. In your intercourse with your brethren, if they are your inferiors, strive to inspire confidence rather than respect. Jesus will soon give you this lesson by His actions and words, as He did by the whole of His exterior appearance.

Second and Third Points.—Consider the actions and hear the words. While the disciples of Emmaus were striving to communicate their joy to the others, and these discussed their statement, adding so much strength to that of the other witnesses, Jesus suddenly appears in the midst of the assembly and says: "Peace be to you! I had promised it, I give it, it is I, fear not." At the sight of Him, at the sound of that voice so well known to them, the apostles are dumbfounded; and in their trouble, being unable to believe in the reality of such a happy event, they thought they saw a spirit.

Jesus has to reassure them anew; and He does so with ineffable goodness. "Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" Do you no longer know your Master? He speaketh to you now. "See My hands and feet." These wounds I

keep as an eternal monument of My love for you. "Handle and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have." While so speaking He showed them His hands, His feet, His side. What impression did this ravishing spectacle produce upon them? Did they dare touch this adorable body? But the Lord invited, and as it were commanded them to do so. Sacred wounds, which I have the happiness to adore and to touch every day, heal all the infirmities of my soul; of these the most dangerous must be my want of strong and lively faith.

However, some did not yet believe, and wondered for joy. In order to omit no means of convincing them, the Lord asked them: "Have you here anything to eat?" And He ate in their presence. At the same time, "He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." Having thus given them confidence, and fully convinced them of His Resurrection, He approached them, not to cause them sadness, but to leave His ministers an example of the moderation and charity which they should use when obliged to correct others. "He upbraided them for their incredulity . . . because they did not believe them who had seen Him after He was risen again." He had, however, a more serious charge against them. They had not believed His own words, when He had so clearly announced to them His Resurrection on the third day. Our Saviour in His glorious life continues to be ever meek, ever humble. One would almost say that He does not resent an insult when it is offered to Him personally. The apostles acknowledged that they had offended their good Master, and remembered that they had often offended Him before; His indulgence toward them, while covering them with confusion, touched them to the very heart, and became one of the strongest bonds which united them to Him.

Let us learn of Jesus how to rightly fulfil the difficult duty of fraternal correction. The best way to secure the amending of a fault is to make it appear that we have forgotten it, especially if the offence was a personal one. Let us learn of the apostles to rise after our falls, and to use them as means to grow humble and fervent in the service of God.

Colloquy with Our Lord, uniting our adorations to their adorations, and our joy to their joy. Beseech Jesus Christ risen from the dead to work in us, through holy communion, the blessed effects which His apparition worked in the apostles.

Domine Jesu, rogo te humiliter, ut, sicut post gloriosam resurrectionem tuam discipulis dixisti: Ego sum, nolite timere, sic etiam animam meam clementer respicias, eamque consolari digneris iisdem verbis tuis. Praesertim in hora mortis meae dic animae meae. Salus

tua ego sum noli timere de iniquitatibus tuis, quia, ego sum advocatus reorum; noli timere a corruptione, quia ego sum resurrectio; noli timere a morte, quia ego sum vita; noli timere ab inferno, quia ego sum merces tua magna nimis. (Ludovic. Blosius.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— Contemplate the persons. The whole apostolic college are present except St. Thomas; they appear to be troubled and anxious. If faith were lively, great would be the cause of joy. The two disciples of Emmaus, entering suddenly, relate with animation what has happened to them. Jesus Christ appears in the midst of them; He appears at the same time full of kindness and majesty.

Second and Third Points.—Consider the actions and hear the words. Jesus appears. "Peace be to you, fear not." The apostles imagine that they see a spirit. The Saviour must calm them, eat in their presence, remark to them that spirits have neither flesh nor bones. He invites them to touch His wounds; at the same time He opens their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, and upbraids them for their incredulity. In His glorious life He continues to be kind as ever before. Let us learn of Him how to fulfil the difficult duty of fraternal correction; and of the apostles, how to profit by our faults by becoming more humble.

MEDITATION LVI.

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

1.—*The Good Priest Expects with Confidence the Glorious Resurrection.*

2.—*He Strives to Fulfil the Conditions Necessary for Its Accomplishment.*

First Point.—The good priest expects the glorious resurrection with confidence. He sees a sure pledge of this resurrection in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which contains the principle, the motive, and the model of our own resurrection; its principle, since He who raised Himself, can raise us up also from the grave; the motive which induces Him to raise us up in reality, and the model for its realization.

I. Principle of our resurrection in that of Jesus Christ. It is

by His own power that He raised Himself to life, as it was of His own free will He had given up His life. He needed no other help. His Resurrection from the grave is in Him the act of sovereign power. He can repeat for others the miracle He performed in His own case. The miracle of a God-man dying and then raising Himself to life, is a greater miracle than that of a God-man living, restoring life to other men. He can and will raise us up at the Last Day.

II. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ the reason for our resurrection. We are united to Him by so many sacred ties that our resurrection is a necessary consequence of His. The fact of His Resurrection does not suffice to satisfy either Himself or ourselves; our resurrection must be the complement of His. His designs would not be accomplished if He would not make us sharers in His triumphs; for as His glory is the principle of our happiness, so our happiness should constitute a part of His glory. He is our head, we are His members. Is it not reasonable that the members should share in the condition of their head? *Quo enim praecessit gloria capitis eo vocatur et spes corporis.* (St. Leo. serm. 1, de Ascens.) Being our chief, He wishes that His members should act, suffer, live, and die as He did. Does He not wish them also to rise as He did? Since He gives us a share in His labors is it not just that He should give us participation in His rewards? He is Our Saviour, and His redemption is abundant; but not unless through Him we recover all that we have lost in Adam—the life of the body as well as that of the soul. If we were not to rise, it might be said that He has not saved the whole man. He is our life; the spirit which raised Him is within us. Such is the marvelous effect of communion that it is not we who live, but He who liveth in us. "I live, not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 20.) How then, says a holy doctor, are there men so unreasonable as to refuse the hope of immortal life to bodies which have so often eaten the flesh of a God in whom is the very source of immortality? "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood has everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the Last Day." (John, vii. 59.) Could the promise be more positive?

Thou wilt not permit, O Lord, that the sanctuaries of our hearts, so often consecrated by Thy presence, be reduced forever to the corruption of the grave. Death could claim Thee but a few hours. Thou hast made us participants of Thy immortality by means of Thy Sacrament, and we also hope in the word of Thy prophet: "Thou wilt not give Thy holy one to see corruption." From all of this St. Paul drew the inference: "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again." (1 Cor. xv. 13.)

III. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a pattern of our own resurrection. Can we imagine anything more beautiful than this triumph of the Saviour, this glorified humanity, this material body living the life of a spiritualized body adorned with the prerogatives of an ethereal being? Let us say to ourselves that such will one day be our own state for all eternity. When Jesus will come and raise our bodies from the dust of the grave, He will make them like unto His own glorified body. "Who will reform the body of our lowness, made alike to the body of His glory." (Phil. iii. 21.) Our bodies are now liable to corruption, to sufferings, to death; but then they will enjoy the same incorruptibility, the same impassibility, the same subtility, the same splendor as the body of Jesus Christ. "It is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory; it is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power; it is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body." (1 Cor. xv. 42.)

It is true, however, that this blessed transformation will be the lot only of the friends of God. For behold a great, a dreadful mystery. "We shall all indeed rise, but we shall not all be changed." The future resurrection, sweet hope for the good, is great terror for the wicked. The good will rise to live eternally. "They that have done good shall come forth unto the resurrection of life." But the wicked will come out of one grave only to be cast into another; to the grave of earth shall succeed the grave of fire, which shall never be extinguished. "But they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment." (John, v. 29.) O Lord, how blind is he, who, after a tepid, unfruitful life, a life full of sins perhaps, imagines that he will experience the glorious resurrection which Thou hast promised to none but to Thy faithful servants! "Wherefore, brethren, labor the more, that by good works you may make sure of your calling and election." (Pet. ii. 1, 10.)

Second Point.—The good priest strives to fulfil the conditions attached to the promise of a glorious resurrection. Let us hear St. Paul: "If we be dead with Him, we shall live also with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." (2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.) "We are the sons of God, and if sons, heirs also, heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ; yet, so if we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him." (Rom. viii. 17.) "If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His Resurrection." (Rom. vi. 5.) All our claims to the resurrection of the elect are grounded upon our union with Jesus Christ, whom St. Paul calls first-born from the dead. He is our King; if we fight with Him, we will reign with Him. He is our Brother; we will have a share in His inheri-

tance, but only as we will have shared in His sufferings. The Chief whose members we are was humbled, "becoming obedient unto the death of the cross;" we will not be crowned with Him in glory unless we make, as He did, the sacrifice of our honor, of our liberty, of our life. If we resemble Jesus immolated, we shall be made like unto Jesus glorified. Let us enter the grave as He entered it. He carried naught into it but wounds and bruises; let us, at least, carry into it a penitent body worn out by works of the ministry. Moreover, the Holy Eucharist is given us as a pledge of our future glory. *Futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur.* Let us, therefore, honor this mystery. With hearts full of love let us receive this living and life-giving bread; we will be raised up by the Spirit of God, and because of that Spirit which lives in us. "If the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your natural bodies, because of His spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. viii. 11.) Let us, therefore, live as Jesus did, by the life of this divine Spirit, being docile to His inspirations.

These are the grounds upon which rests our glorious resurrection. Examine yourself, take strong resolutions. As a preparation for your Mass, address to Our Lord the following prayer of St. Anselm: *Fac me, Domine Jesu, ita haec mysteria ore et corde percipere, atque fide et affectu sentire, ut per eorum virtutem sic merear complantari similitudini mortis et resurrectionis tuae per veteris hominis mortificationem et novitatem sanctae vitae. . . ut maneam in te et tu in me; quatenus in resurrectione reformes corpus humilitatis meae, configuratum corpori claritatis tuae, et in te in aeternum gaudeam de gloria tua. Qui cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivis et regnas in saecula saeculorum.* (Or. 34.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The good priest expects with confidence a glorious resurrection. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ proves His ability and willingness to raise us up from the dead. He has the power to accomplish this. The miracle of a God-man dying and then raising Himself to life is more astonishing than that of a God-man living, raising other men to life. It is His will. We are so united to Him that our resurrection is a necessary consequence of His. We are His members; members partake of the condition of the head. He is Our Saviour; the work of His Redemption would not be complete if we did not recover in Him all that we lost in Adam, the life of the body as well as that of the soul. He nourishes us with His glorified flesh; our bodies be-

come His sanctuaries. Could He permit them to be reduced forever to the corruption of the grave? Has He not said: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, has life everlasting, and I will raise him up at the Last Day"? Our resurrection shall be accomplished as was His own. There are, indeed, two different resurrections—the one frightful, the other infinitely blessed. Let us thank God for having placed us in a state in which we can easily escape the first and secure the second.

Second Point.—The good priest aims to fulfil the conditions to which are attached the hope of a glorious resurrection. "If we be dead with Jesus Christ, we shall live also with Him." He is our King; let us suffer with Him, and with Him we shall triumph. He is our Brother; we shall be co-heirs with Him if we share in His poverty and sufferings. Let us enter the grave as Christ did, and we will rise from it as He did. He carried within the grave naught but wounds and bruises. Let us, at least, carry to our grave a penitent body.

MEDITATION LVII.

DOGMA OF THE RESURRECTION—TWO MOTIVES FOR TEACHING IT ZEALOUSLY.

1.—*Revelation Regarding the Resurrection of the Dead.*
2.—*Happy Results of Belief in the Resurrection.*

First Point.—The revelations made by God concerning this dogma should inspire great zeal in its teaching. Faith in the resurrection was communicated to our first parents immediately after the Fall, transmitted from age to age through the patriarchs and the prophets, sealed by the blood of martyrs even before the coming of the Messias, taught and professed with greater clearness under the New Covenant, figured in all nature; and it is evident that it is God's will that we should always believe in this doctrine.

Adam had hardly been condemned when God comforted him by the promise of Redemption, which contained that of the resurrection. "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive." (1 Cor. xv. 22.) In giving his companion the name of Eve, mother of the living, Adam foretold, in a certain degree, the coming of that admirable Mother whose Son would be the Resurrection and the Life. And he transmitted this belief to his descendants.

We find this belief among the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; this last professes it openly a moment before his death. "I will look for Thy salvation, O Lord." (Gen. xlix. 18.) Full of this hope he will go satisfied into the grave.

We find it among the prophets. Is it not a comfort to hear Isaias saying to the faithful people: "Thy dead man shall live . . . awake and give praise, ye that dwell in the dust." Daniel speaks of the different conditions of the good and of the wicked as a consequence of the resurrection. "Some shall awake unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach to see it always." (Dan. xii. 2.) What is there more striking and full of majesty than the vision of Ezechiel? After describing it, the prophet adds: "Thus says the Lord, behold I will open your graves, and will bring you out of your sepulchers . . . and you shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall have opened your sepulchers." (xxxvii. 12, 13.) This faith comforted Job in his sorrows. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and on the Last Day I shall rise out of the earth, and I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God." (Job, xix. 25, 26.)

This faith inspired the Machabees with their heroic constancy. One of them, in presenting his limbs to be tortured, said: "These I have from heaven, but for the laws of God, I now despise them, because I hope to receive them again from Him"; and another: "It is better to be put to death by men, to look for hope from God, to be raised up again by Him." (2 Mach. vii. 11, 14.)

It is, however, in the Gospel that this truth is most clearly taught. Not only did Our Lord teach it, but He makes it evident through the resurrections which He wrought. In the first instance, He recalls to life the daughter of Jairus a moment after her death. He next raises up from the dead the son of the widow Naim, whom they were carrying to the grave, and later He restores life to Lazarus, who had been dead four days. At last He raises Himself to life. God does more. To continually remind us of this consoling dogma, He wished that nature should everywhere bear its image. The changing of the seasons, the succession of day and of night, the many transformations which we witness in the natural order, everything typifies the glorious resurrection. In winter everything is dead, yet comes to life in the springtime. The seed is put in the earth as the corpse is put in the grave; it begins, like it, to decompose only to shoot forth again; and the husbandman will gather up thirty or forty grains for the one grain which he had lost. Of what does death deprive the just man if we compare it with that which the resurrection will restore to him?

God wishes this truth to be engraved in the hearts of men, as a safeguard against passion, and an encouragement to virtue. In order, however, that it may produce those results, we must reflect deeply upon it. Hence comes the obligation on priests to often make it the subject of their exhortations.

Second Point.—Results produced by belief in the resurrection of the dead. Here are the principal results: Disregard of the death of the body, esteem for that mystical death which prepares us for immortality; holy love and respect for our bodies, since their destiny is so glorious.

Death is nothing to him who expects a glorious resurrection; it is not so much the loss of life as a sleep; and hence the Scriptures call it: "Brethren, I will not have you to be ignorant concerning those who are asleep, that you may not be sorrowful as those who have no hope." (1 Thess. iv. 12.) The unwise alone are they who believe that the just die. When they leave this life they enter into rest. "In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die . . . but they are in peace." (Wisd. iii. 2, 3.) There is no affliction which is not softened by this hope.

In proportion as a strong faith in the resurrection induces us to despise the death of the body, so much does it urge us to esteem the mortification or mystical death which withdraws us from the slavery of senses to place us under the absolute control of grace. This is an obligation common to all those who belong to Jesus Christ. "They who are Christ's have crucified their flesh." (Gal. v. 24.) Every Christian is a living victim. He should sacrifice himself every day, should nail his passions to the cross. For the priest the obligation is stricter since he ought to be a more perfect image of Jesus Christ crucified. Painful as this obligation is to nature, it is made sweet by the hope of a blessed resurrection. "Therefore my heart has been glad, and my tongue has rejoiced; moreover, my flesh also shall rest in peace" (Ps. xv. 9)—the Lord has pledged Himself to draw my body out of the grave, and to glorify it. If I be faithful, therefore, I cheerfully submit to the yoke of His law, I renounce myself, I take up my cross and bless His goodness for preparing so much glory and happiness for my body as a reward for sufferings so light. From this very moment, this hope is rest for my flesh. "My flesh shall rest in peace." The countenance of a certain martyr shone with joy while the torturer was actually cutting off his limbs; being asked for the reason of this joy, he answered, I am the vine of the Lord. Cut and dressed during the winter, the resurrection will come, and the flesh shall blossom anew.

Finally, we should love our bodies and treat them with great

respect, since they are to have so large a share in the eternal felicity of the soul. We may well be afflicted when we see some of our brethren committing most lamentable excesses. Does he love his body who denies it the glory and the delights of heaven, to devote it to the insults and torments of eternal reprobation? *Heu! quanta insania,* exclaims St. Jerome, *exiguis et brevi tempore duraturis deliciis, aeternas amittere delicias et cruciatus subire sempiternos!* Take pity on those unfortunates. Teach without ceasing the nature of true love of self, as we find it so admirably conveyed in this mystery. Often repeat the admonition of St. Paul: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap; for he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption; but he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting." (Gal. vi. 7, 8.) Apply to yourself the counsel he gives to Timothy: "Be mindful that the Lord Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead." (Tim. ii. 8.) This remembrance sustains the courage of the apostle and the pastor, and furnishes the strength of the martyr.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The revelation made by God concerning the resurrection should induce us to teach it with great care. The doctrine of the resurrection was given to our first parents, transmitted from age to age, sealed by the blood of martyrs even under the Old Law, was taught and professed more openly under the New Dispensation, is figured in all nature. Adam was comforted by this promise, as were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the prophets Isaias, Ezechiel, Job, the Machabees. Resurrections effected by Jesus Christ. Nature everywhere affords us its figure. Hence we are all obliged to preach this doctrine.

Second Point.—Results which this doctrine should produce. Contempt of corporal death, esteem of spiritual death, respect and affection for our body. For him who expects the resurrection, death is only a sleep. This belief induces us to love mortification. "Therefore my heart has been glad." How much worthy of respect our bodies are, how little are they respected!

Low Sunday.

MEDITATION LVIII.

A GOOD PRIEST A MINISTER OF PEACE.

1.—*He Asks it for the Church.*
2.—*He Secures it for his Brethren.*
3.—*He Preserves and Perfects it in Himself.*

First Point.—A good priest prays for peace in the name and in behalf of the Church. The Church having chosen us to be the interpreters of her desires with God, does not leave us in ignorance of what those desires are. *Peace:* such is the principal object of the public prayer which she commands us to offer. Her children provoke the anger of God by offending Him. She wants her ministers to strive to appease Him by offering to Him unceasingly the sacrifice of propitiation and praise. She wishes especially that at the altar they should employ the immense benefits conferred by the blood of Jesus Christ to bring down from heaven upon earth all the benedictions of peace.

This is the first fruit she expects from the Holy Sacrifice! *In primis quae tibi offerimus pro Ecclesia tua . . . quam pacificare . . . digneris toto orbe terrarum.* A moment before the Consecration, she bids us extend our hands over the offering to symbolize our possession, in her name, of Jesus Christ and of all His merits. Notice the prayer which she puts on our lips at the solemn moment at which the Almighty will obey our voice: *Ut placatus accipias;* be appeased, O Lord, at the sight of Thy Son mystically immolated: *Diesque nostras in tua pace disponas:* Dispose, place the days of our life under the empire of Thy peace; by this Thou shalt preserve us from eternal damnation, and place us among the number of Thy elect: *Atque ab aeterna damnatione nos eripi, et in electorum tuorum jubeas grege numerari.* When, however, the holy Victim is already on the altar we present to God this Victim which is so pleasing to Him, and through His merits we ask for "peace." *Da propitius pacem in diebus nostris.* Again, when we raise up our voice, it is to recite the Lord's prayer, which is an evidence of reconciliation between the Father and His children, and also to pray for the perpetuity of this blessed peace. *Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum.* Finally, we are about to consummate the holy mysteries. Having our eyes tenderly fixed on the adorable Lamb,

and striking our breast, we twice beseech Him to have pity on us: *Miserere nobis;* and on the third to grant us that which is most precious in the treasures of His mercies, to give us peace. *Dona nobis pacem.* We end by reminding Jesus Christ of what He said to His apostles on the eve of His death, "that He left them peace, that He gave them His peace," and solicit Him to grant the same favor to the whole Church. We not only ask the peace which He leaves and which the apostles already enjoyed, since they were pure (John, xiii. 10), but we also ask the peace which He gives, His peace; *pacem meam,* a peace unalterable, which He enjoys Himself, and destines for His elect; a peace which, consequently, is according to His will: *Secundum voluntatem, tuam,* since He wishes to reunite all in the bosom of His Father. Let us examine our conscience: Do we console the Church through the fervor with which we address those prayers to God? From these prayers she expects the surcease of her sorrows and the salvation of her children.

Second Point.—A good priest brings the blessing of peace upon his fellow beings. This is the object of all his duties. Peace, according to St. Augustine, should be defined as the tranquillity which results from order: *Pax est tranquillitas ordinis.* There we find order and rest, where everything is in its place. "O man," the same Doctor exclaims, "thy place is the bosom of thy God." *Locus tuus. Deus tuus.* In Him alone art thou happy, remaining united to Him by obedience and love. Let Him govern thy mind and thy heart; believe when He speaks, obey when He commands. Then shalt thou be in peace, and shalt taste the sweets of peace.

Jesus Christ came into the world for the sole end of procuring to man the two-fold peace of mind and of heart. For this end also He established the priesthood. The priest continues His work of peace-giving. In the administration of the Sacraments, but especially in the holy tribunal, he gives the peace of the heart, by giving grace, which is ever accompanied with peace when properly received.[1] In everything he labors against sin and passion; against sin, which destroys peace by remorse; against passion, which begets sin, and which brings agitation and trouble, and sows the seeds of dissension. "From whence are wars and contentions among you? Are they not hence, from your concupiscences, which war in your members?" Does not the priest in the sick room appear like an angel of peace, restoring calm

[1] "Grace to you and peace" is the ordinary greeting of St. Paul at the beginning of his epistles.

and serenity to anxious souls, blotting away the last traces of faults, and opening the kingdom of eternal peace? How sweet and powerful is the influence of a zealous priest to prevent dissensions and preserve union in the midst of families! O preacher of peace, how beautiful your ministry! How pleasing to God, how useful to your fellow beings are all your labors in that direction! "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace." (Rom. x. 15.)

If your conscience reproaches you with not having fulfilled all the designs of God in this respect, have recourse to His clemency; and hold it as certain that He will forgive you your faults, however great they may have been, provided you repent. He has but thoughts of peace concerning you. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you . . . thoughts of peace and not of affliction." (Jer. xxix. 11.)

Third Point.—A good priest preserves and perfects the existence of peace. In himself, in the two-fold interest of his sanctification and that of his brethren. Peace is the surest and the shortest way to arrive at perfection; it prepares the soul for all the virtues, and places it in a state wherein God loves to enrich it with all His gifts. "The Lord will bless the people with peace." (Ps. xxviii. 11.) St. John Climacus says that the tranquil soul is adorned with virtues, like the firmament with stars; and that her state may be called the interior heaven of man.

We have much need of peace of mind to direct ourselves and others wisely. When we are free from agitation God enlightens us. His light is reflected in us as the rays of the sun are reflected in waters that are calm and undisturbed. As St. Ambrose remarks: *Summus sapientiae finis est ut simus mente tranquilla.* When we are in peace, God dwells in us. "And His place is in peace." (Ps. lxv. 3.) And we are then strong against any attack. "God in the midst thereof, it shall not be troubled." (Ps. xlv. 6.)

This is also the means which Our Lord Jesus Christ uses to strengthen His apostles after His Resurrection. They have seen Him in His state of glory, and they are filled with joy; trials, however, will soon come. The first will be deprivation of His visible presence. What will He do to mitigate its bitterness, to prepare them for the adversities which He had predicted? Let us hear Him: "I must return to My Father"; yet a little while, and you shall not see Me. But, before leaving you, I will leave you a last pledge of My love. I will not give you riches. These I have taught you to trample upon. Neither will I confer honors upon you. I met with many rebuffs, and preferred rather to be despised than to be esteemed by men. I give you a blessing

which has the power to drive away sorrow, to change sadness into joy. "Peace I leave you, My peace I give you." It was indeed owing to the chaste delights of interior peace that the apostles, the martyrs, the saints, triumphed over the world with all its allurements and torments. "Do then seek after peace and pursue it." (Ps. xxxiii. 15.) Go to the altar and unite yourself to the Prince of peace. "And may the God of peace Himself sanctify you in all things; that your whole spirit, and soul and body may be preserved blameless in the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. v. 23.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—A good priest asks for peace for the Church. Peace is the first object of public prayer, the first fruit of the Divine Sacrifice. *In primis quae tibi offerimus, pro Ecclesia tua . . . quam pacificare . . . digneris . . . Ut placatus accipias, diesque nostros in tua pace disponas. Da propitius pacem.*

Second Point.—A good priest secures the blessing of peace for his brethren. This is the end of all the duties which he fulfils, particularly that of the holy tribunal. In the sick room he is the angel of peace; in families he maintains peace or restores it; in the pulpit he is the apostle of peace.

Third Point.—A good priest preserves and perfects the existence of peace in himself. In the two-fold interest of his sanctification and of that of the neighbor. To him peace of mind is necessary for prayer and for the proper guidance of others. Through the power secured by the sweet delights of peace, the apostles, the martyrs, and all the saints triumphed over hell and the world.

MEDITATION LIX.

CONDITIONS OF SPIRITUAL PEACE.

1.—*No Peace with God Save through Innocence.*
2.—*No Peace with Our Fellow Beings Save through Charity.*
3.—*No Peace with Ourselves Unless We Combat against Ourselves.*

First Point.— Peace with God through innocence. St. Augustine asks: *Quid est pacem habere ad Deum, nisi velle quod jubet et nolle quod prohibet?* How can we have peace with God, if we take pleasure in that which displeases Him, if we take satisfaction in that which offends Him?

Let us examine the principle. God is my ultimate end, my sovereign good, my center; when united to this adorable center, I am in peace; when separated from it, I am, necessarily, in trouble and pain. But I am united to God only when I submit my will to His will. If I resist this will, I quit the sphere of peace. If I do not obey a law which my whole nature and my religion demand that I respect, my reason will necessarily turn against me; my faith will condemn me; my conscience will torture me. Could I, O my God, entirely erase from my mind the remembrance of Thy threats and of Thy judgments? Can I think on this without terror? *Mala conscientia semper timida est et inquieta. Suaviter requiesces, si cor tuum te non reprehenderit.* (Imit. l. ii., ch. 6.)

Peace is the result of justice. (Is. xxxii. 17.) "Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad." (Prov. xxxii. 21.) "Peace to every one that worketh good." (Rom. ii. 14.) It is the reward of order, as disquietude is the punishment of disorder. It follows that since even light faults in a profession as holy as ours are a more culpable infraction of justice and order, it is not at all surprising that a negligent and tepid priest should live in a state of trouble and anxiety. *Vis habere pacem? fac justitiam. Duae amicae sunt; tu forte unam vis, alteram non facis. Nemo est qui nolit pacem; sed non omnes volunt operari justitiam.* (St. Aug.) When a soul possesses the purity which results from justice, nothing prevents it from uniting itself to God, the center of its peace. "Submit thyself then to Him, and have peace." (Job, xxii. 21.)

Second Point.—Peace with our neighbor through charity. Our peace with God is the fruit of our love of God and of His law. "Much peace to those who love Thy law." Our peace with our neighbor is the fruit of that sincere charity which makes us love him, notwithstanding his defects and the many ways in which he may have wronged us. Let each one treat others as he wishes to be treated by them; let him spare, bear, and excuse, as he wishes to be spared, borne with, and excused; let him love as he wishes to be loved. Discord and divisions will then become impossible. "If the God of charity be with you, the God of peace shall also be with you." (2 Cor. xiii. 11.) The sea is calm when not disturbed by wind. The man who wishes to introduce peace into the world must eliminate the words *mine* and *thine*, those words which cause so many wars and kindle so many fires.

Pastor of souls! The happiness of your life and the success of your ministry depend in a great measure on the maintenance of peace between you and your fellow man, whether he be your

superior, your equal, or your inferior. Let nothing trouble the harmony of your relations with any. "If it be possible, as much as in you, having peace with all men." (Rom. xii. 18.) And He who calls Himself the Father of peacemakers will prove a tender Father to you. He will anticipate your wishes and load you with the blessings of His grace, and you will have power to work out the salvation of your brethren.

Much self-abnegation is needed to live in peace with those who hate peace; for this, says St. Augustine, is the point recommended in almost every page of the Scripture: *Prope nulla est pagina, quae nos non admoneat . . . cum his qui oderunt pacem esse debere pacificos.* (Ep. 249.) Let us hear St. Paul: "I, therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called. With all humility and mildness, with patience supporting one another in charity. Careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. iv. 1.) In another passage he is more pressing yet: "If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ; if any comfort of charity, if any society of the spirit, if any bowels of commiseration, fulfil ye my joy, that you may be of one mind, having the same charity, being of one accord, agreeing in sentiment." (Phil. ii. 1, 2.) To wage implacable war against sin, not to offend the sinner, and always to love him, is a work which none but a generous charity can perform.

Third Point.—Peace with one's self, by fighting against one's self. Such is one meaning of the following words of Our Saviour: "I came not to send peace, but the sword. A man's enemies shall be they of his own household." (Matt. x. 34, 36.) It will only be by continually struggling against my inclinations that I will obtain that equanimity which will render me superior to all events. Peace is the fruit of victory, as victory is the fruit of noble struggles. He who lives in the presence of God understands the following words of the Following of Christ: *Quandocumque homo aliquid inordinate, appetit, statim in se inquietus fit.* (Im. l. 1, ch. vi.) Such is the human heart; it can not be without desires, and if it does not curb and guide them, they become its torture. Let us never tire of meditating upon these maxims: *Resistendo passionibus inventitur pax vera cordis. . . . Non est ergo pax in corde hominis carnalis, non in homine exterioribus dedito.* (Ib. l. i, ch. 6.) *Beati simplices quoniam multam pacem habebunt.* (l. i, ch. 2.) The man of pure intentions, rising above his passions, elevated above common opinion, and seeking God alone, *potest stabilis corde esse.* (Ib. l. i, ch. 3.) Many, however, are the combats to be fought to conquer one's self and to place one's self entirely under

the empire of grace. *Quare quidam sanctorum tam perfecti et contemplativi fuerunt? Quia omnino se ipsos mortificare ab omnibus terrenis desideriis studuerunt; et ideo totis medullis cordis Deo inhaerere, atque libere sibi vacare potuerunt.* (Ib. l. i, ch. 11.) Hence let us draw this conclusion: *Qui melius scit pati majorem tenebit pacem. Iste est victor sui et dominus mundi, amicus Christi et haeres coeli.* (Ib. l. ii, ch. 3.)

Purity of heart, acquiescence to the will of God, charity toward my brethren, continual struggling against my own inclinations, such are the conditions of my peace and, as a consequence, of my happiness. These I will fulfil, O my God, if Thou wilt but help me with Thy grace. Establish within my soul the silence and calmness which Thou expectest for Thy sweet communings. In this soul of mine, I see only impatient ardor, trouble, confusion. The tranquil desire and action, the zeal which acts without hurry, can come from Thee alone. O eternal wisdom, who art infinite in action, unalterable in tranquillity, the model and principle of true peace! Do not refuse us this heavenly gift; it is the pledge of Thy love, the object of Thy promises, and the price of Thy Son's blood.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Peace with God through innocence. God is the central point of my existence. If I act contrary to His sovereign will, if I resist Him, I escape from the sphere of peace. My religion, my reason, rise up against me. Peace is the work of justice. When a soul has the purity which comes from justice, nothing prevents it from resting in God.

Second Point.—Peace with our neighbor through charity. If I treat others as I desire to be treated, bearing with them, sparing, excusing them, discord becomes impossible. From the moment that the God of charity is with me, the God of peace is with me also. But we have need of much patience and vigilance to live in peace with those who hate this virtue.

Third Point.—Peace with one's self by struggling against one's self. Peace is the fruit of victory, just as victory is the result of conflict. If I be master of myself, I will be, in a manner, master over everything. In resisting passions true peace is to be found. *Qui melius scit pati majorem tenebit pacem.* (Im.)

Second Sunday after Easter.

MEDITATION LX.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

1.—*The Good Shepherd Described by Our Lord Jesus Christ.*
2.—*The Priest who Answers the Description of the Good Shepherd.*

First Point.—The good shepherd described by Jesus Christ. Take and read, O you whom the Son of God has associated to Himself in the government of souls. Be full of esteem for the noble task imposed on you; but be filled with the spirit of your ministry. "I am the Good Shepherd!" By these words the Son of God teaches us that no one is a good shepherd except as he resembles or endeavors to resemble Him. Let us study this resemblance.

"The good shepherd gives His life for His sheep." This first trait teaches us what should be the habitual disposition of the good shepherd, and what he actually does for his flock. He is ever ready to expose himself to temporal death to preserve his sheep from eternal death, and to sacrifice himself, if necessary, for their salvation, as Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for us. Figuratively speaking, he throws himself among roaring wolves when circumstances require it. He suffers himself to be wounded and torn for his flock, and often by his patience overcomes his enemies, transforming them into sheep.

He gives his life, a condition of absolute necessity. It was acted upon to the letter in the early ages of the Church, in those happy times when all the faithful deserved to be called saints. How admirable the priesthood in those times! To accept the pastoral charge was to consecrate one's self to martyrdom, and St. Paul was right when he praised those who desired this honor. "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." (1 Tim. iii. 1.) This was to aspire to die for the salvation of souls. *Tunc repersa sunt ovilia sanguine pastorum, maduerunt campi caedibus pastorum, cruentata sunt pascua vulneribus pastorum, sacrata est terra corporibus pastorum, dilatatum est coelum animabus quas pastores pro suis ovibus posuerunt.* (Rup. in Joan. c. x.) O Pastors, forget not what kind of men they were whose ministry you are called to continue. If you are disposed to die for the

flock which Jesus Christ confided to you, will you refuse to devote to it your labors, your liberty, your repose? Will you be wanting in vigilance to discover and banish from it all evils? Will you fail in courage in its defence, in attention and prudence to lead it to the best pastures?

"And I know Mine, and Mine know Me." The good shepherd knows his sheep. Living always among them, he visits them all, is accessible to all; he makes himself acquainted with their inclinations, their infirmities and their wants. His sheep know him. Have they not innumerable evidences of his solicitude, of his devotion to all their interests? Hence their confidence in him is unbounded.

"As the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father, and I give My life for My sheep." As the Father and I love each other with infinite love through the knowledge that we have of each other, so the knowledge I have of My sheep, enkindles in Me so ardent a love for them that I am ready to sacrifice myself for their salvation. On Calvary and on the altar the good shepherd learns how he ought to love souls.

"And I have other sheep; them also I must bring." The good shepherd loves all his sheep. Those which he has under his eyes do not lead him to forget those which are away, which, alas, are so unhappy, so exposed to danger! Jesus Christ might have resided permanently in Jerusalem, or in some other part of Judea, and might have invited those who desired His services to come to Him; but this He did not do, as He wished to set the example to His ministers. His heart is filled with emotion at the thought of the stray sheep of the house of Israel; He travels through cities and villages, hamlets, deserts. How much He desired to bring into the divine fold of His Church all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the Jews, all men! "Come to Me all!" What is His object in sitting at the well of Jacob? He seeks a stray sheep, viz., the sinful woman of Samaria. He seeks another in the house of Simon the leper—it was Magdalen; at Capharnaum in the custom-house, it was St. Matthew; at Jericho, it was Zaccheus; and on the road to Damascus it was St. Paul, in whose behalf this Good Shepherd comes down from heaven a second time. O Priest, you who take no trouble to bring back to God those who abandon Him, where would you be had He not deigned to seek you? Be, therefore, such a pastor for your brethren as He was for you. Why do you confine your zeal almost exclusively to a few souls, contrary to the practice of Him who leaves the ninety-nine sheep in the desert to go after that which was lost.

"He goes before them." This is another characteristic of the

good shepherd; in place of making his flock walk ahead of him, as would an imperious master, he draws it gently after him, opens the way for it, and is the first to practise all that he teaches. Bound as I am to employ all the means in my power for the sanctification of my people, can I ignore that of good example?

Second Point.—Who is the pastor who most perfectly realizes this idea of the good shepherd? It is he who imitates the tenderness, energy, and constancy of the love of God for souls. We find its proof in both the Old and the New Testaments.

The Lord commands Moses to carry the people of Israel in his arms, as a nurse carries her young infant. Writing to the Thessalonians, St. Paul says: "We became little ones in the midst of you, as if a nurse should cherish her children." (1 Thess. ii. 7.) If you wish to understand the tenderness of heart of a good pastor, hear Moses pleading the cause of his people, beseeching God to forgive them or to strike himself. Read the whole of the second epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "Who is weak and I am not weak, who is scandalized and I am not on fire? I most gladly will spend and be spent for your souls, although loving you more, I be loved less. Our mouth is open to you, O ye Corinthians, our heart is enlarged; you are not straitened in us." Recall to mind God Himself, the Father and Pastor of all men, comparing Himself now to the "eagle enticing her young to fly, and hovering over them" (Deut. xxxii. 11), now to the "hen which doth gather her young under her wings" (Matt. xxiii. 27), to shelter thee against danger. Those are touching images, but also terrible accusations against a pastor who has no affection for his flock.

A tender love, however, does not suffice; energy must be added to this love. My zeal should rise above all human considerations, above perils, even above the complaints of my sick sheep, when, for their cure, some sharp and painful remedy must be applied. Their true interests should be dearer to me than their feelings. One only thing should I fear—to fear something else more than God. St. John Chrysostom said to his people: *Quidquid terroris habet mundus, ego contemno. Etiamsi fluctus insurgat, etiamsi totum pelagus adversum me conturbetur, etiamsi principum furor . . . ego millies pro vobis immolari paratus sum.*

Finally, the love of the good pastor for his flock is proof against all obstacles; nothing tires out his constancy; neither difficulties excited by hell, for in these he sees a sure pledge of heavenly blessings; nor indifference, nor insult; his compassion for his sheep keeps pace with their ill-treatment of him. When a sinner strays away from God, he goes in search of him. If the first attempt proves unsuccessful, he tries again and again.

O my God, if Thy priests loved Thee as Thou dost deserve, how many souls would they not bring back to Thee: *Si amatis Deum, rapite omnes ad amorem Dei . . . Rapite quos potestis, hortando, portando, rogando, disputando, rationem reddendo cum mansuetudine et lenitate; rapite ad amorem, arripite, adducite attrahite quos potestis.* (St. Aug. in Ps. xxxii et 96.)

When at the altar honor Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd, and relish the sweetness of these words: *Bone pastor, panis vere, Jesu nostri miserere*, etc. Draw determination from this magnificent promise: "When the prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory." (1 Pet. v. 4.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— A good priest described by Jesus Christ. By saying to us that He is the good pastor, He declares that none is a good pastor except as he resembles Him. "The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." He is ever ready to expose his temporal life to save his people from eternal death. In the early days of the Church the acceptance of the pastoral charge was a consecration to martyrdom. "I know My sheep, and Mine know Me." Mutual confidence begets mutual affection. "I give My life for My sheep." It is on Calvary and at the altar that the good priest learns how he ought to love souls. "Other sheep I have." He loves all his sheep; he does not forget those that are absent. He attracts them by his example.

Second Point.—Which is the priest who realizes the most perfectly this idea of the good shepherd? It is he who imitates most closely the tenderness, the energy and constancy of the love of God for souls. Moses and St. Paul are admirable models of this tenderness. Energy should be its companion. *Ego millies pro vobis immolari paratus sum.* Contemplate the last characteristic of the Good Shepherd. He goes after the lost sheep until he has found it.

MEDITATION LXI.

JESUS MANIFESTS HIMSELF TO MANY OF HIS DISCIPLES BESIDE THE SEA OF TIBERIAS—CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Consider the Persons.*
2.—*Hear their Words.*
3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—After the Easter festival, the disciples went, according to the direction of the Saviour, to Galilee. Seven of them went on board a ship to fish. During the night they caught nothing. In the morning Jesus appeared on the shore. They did not recognize Him, and He told them to cast the net to the right side of the ship. They did so and caught a quantity of fishes. John said to Peter: "It is the Lord." Peter girded his garments about him, and cast himself into the sea; the others came to land in the ship. Jesus, who had Himself prepared their meal, invited them to eat.

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the shore of the lake, and the ship of the apostles at a short distance.

Third Prelude.—O Jesus, give me grace to know Thee as Thou didst appear on this day, full of charity toward Thy ministers. Give me a share in the light and purity of St. John, the fervor and devotion of St. Peter, in the happiness which all experienced in this miraculous draught of fishes, and during the repast which followed.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. Consider the apostles, who lived in poverty and by the labor of their hands. See them in their ship, working together in perfect union. They are somewhat downcast at the uselessness of their efforts, for, says the Gospel, "That night they caught nothing." Ah, if they knew how great will be their joy in a few moments. Contemplate the Saviour on the shore. "Jesus stood on the shore." He looks kindly at the apostles, and comes to comfort them. He is touched with compassion, seeing that they have labored in vain, that they are hungry. Thus, O my God, dost Thou think of me. When I consider myself forsaken Thou art quite near me. Many times in the past when I was in difficulties, Thou didst visit me interiorly, and assist me. What is there I can not obtain from Thy infinite

mercy, if I pray to Thee with confidence, since Thou grantest me so many favors unasked?

Second and Third Points.—Consider the actions, hear the words. Jesus aims always to convince His ministers of two very important truths: The first, that He watches over their interests with tender care, and that at the appointed time, His assistance will never be wanting to them, either in temporal or spiritual matters; the second, that of themselves and without Him they can do absolutely nothing, either for their salvation or for the salvation of their brethren. How considerately He brought His apostles to a realization of their need, so that they might understand the favor He was about to confer. "Children, have you any meat? They answered Him, No." Let us avow our miseries; let us avow that we have nothing, not even that which is most necessary to us, neither humility, nor light, nor courage—that we expect all from His divine goodness. Jesus says to them: "Cast the net to the right side of the ship . . . they cast, therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." A blessing so unexpected filled them with admiration, and "the disciple . . . whom Jesus loved, said to Peter, It is the Lord."

St. John is the first to recognize Jesus Christ, and St. Jerome assigns the reason for this in the following way: *Solus virgo virginem agnoscit.* (L. i, cont. Jov.) How penetrating are the eyes of purity; how it facilitates the sight of God! (Matt. v. 8.) O Lord, when will it be given to me to see Thee wherever Thou art, and to exclaim with St. John at every moment and in every place: "It is the Lord!" Why should I fix my attention on creatures? It is the Lord Himself who gives me joy in this success, who afflicts me in this trial. "It is the Lord" who permits this humiliation, this adversity. The painful and useless labor of the night was necessary, says St. Gregory, to prepare for the admiration aroused by the miraculous draught of fishes. O Jesus, purify me; I will then love Thee; I will be beloved by Thy Father and by Thee, and Thou wilt condescend to manifest Thyself to me.

St. Peter, at the thought that it was the Lord who stood on the shore, listens only to the impulse of ardent love, girds his garments about him, and casts himself into the sea; the others arrive in the boat. There are two ways of reaching Jesus: The first, an extraordinary way, which is neither to be censured nor always to be followed; the second, an ordinary one, with which we ought to be satisfied. Among the most perfect servants of God there are some who follow their own impulses, and throw themselves into

the bitter waters of sufferings in order the sooner to reach Jesus Christ crucified. There are others of a more calm and peaceful character who remain tranquil in the vessel of Providence, enjoying the favors of their Master when He is present, and calmly awaiting His return when He is absent.[1] Let us admire, and, in the measure of the grace which is given us, let us imitate the fervor of St. Peter. In his eagerness to approach Jesus Christ, he does not consider danger; he is, indeed, the first to reach the shore. There is nothing which so hastens the progress of a soul to its union with God as generosity.

Consider what is passing on the shore when all are assembled. What is the first thing the apostles see? "They see a fire kindled and a fish laid thereon, and bread." The Saviour Himself invites them to partake of the food of which they stood so much in need. "Come and dine." He does more; He helps them with His own divine hands. "Jesus cometh and taketh bread and giveth them. and fish in like manner." O Priest of God, will you wound the heart of Jesus by lack of confidence? Do not be anxious concerning the things necessary for your sustenance; God will provide. You labor to promote His interests, He does not forget yours. While you labor to extend His kingdom on earth, He is preparing for you a delightful banquet in heaven. He will soon say to you, "Come, nourish yourself with My divinity, enter you into the joy of your Master." In the meantime let us nourish ourselves with the Eucharistic bread. Let us go every day to repair our strength and renew our fervor at the sacred table, the center and source of apostolic zeal.

What is going on in the minds of the apostles during this blessed repast? The presence of their Master risen from the dead, His countenance, His voice, the affection He shows for them, the display of His great power, His kind familiarity: everything delights them, and fills them with joy beyond expression. None, however, ask Him who He is. They know that He is the Lord. They are satisfied with adoring Him, with enjoying in silence His divine conversation, His kind looks. The charm which captivates a soul inflamed with love of God, and lost in the contemplation of His grandeur, leaves it only the power of admiration. With perfect tranquillity it loses itself in that abyss of perfections which it discovers. It is the possession of sovereign happiness on earth; even here below it is a torrent of inebriating delights. What will the eternal felicity of heaven be?

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[1] "If He comes to me," said St. Francis de Sales, "I shall receive Him joyfully. If He come not, I shall not hurry to go and meet Him."

Colloquy with Our Lord. Adore His power and bounty, which provide for the wants of all His creatures. Adore the Providence of God, so touchingly attentive to the wants of His ministers. Thank Him for the particular grace He has conferred on you. Cast yourself with entire confidence into His hands, and, being free from all other preoccupation, give yourself exclusively to the work of procuring His glory by gaining hearts to Him.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. The apostles, who live by the labor of their hands. They are sad because their labor was useless. The Saviour on the shore. He comes to comfort His dear apostles. O my God, when I think myself forsaken by Thee Thou art quite near me.

Second and Third Points.—Consider the actions, hear the words. Jesus aims continually to convince us of these two important truths: First, that He constantly watches over our interests, that His assistance will never be wanting. In the second place, that, of ourselves, we can do absolutely nothing. Humility, confidence. Let us, like the apostles, confess that we are destitute. How plentiful the draught of fishes, when Christ's direction was followed! St. John exclaims: "It is the Lord." Purer than the others, he is the first to recognize Jesus. St. Peter casts himself into the sea; his companions come in their ship. There are two ways to go to Jesus. Let us follow the one which He Himself laid out for us, and yet let us admire the fervor of Peter. Nothing so hastens progress in perfection as generosity. What is being done on the shore? What means this repast, prepared and served by the hands of Jesus Christ? What is going on in the souls of the apostles while partaking of this miraculous meal? Let us admire the touching goodness of the Saviour in favor of those who have left all in order to follow Him.

Third Sunday after Easter.

MEDITATION LXII.

PATRONAGE OF ST. JOSEPH.

1.—*Power of St. Joseph in Heaven.*
2.—*Our Reliance upon His Love for Us.*
3.—*How We may Secure a Great Share in His Protection.*

First Point.—Power of St. Joseph in heaven. We can form an idea of it from the teaching of the Church on the subject, and from the offices he filled on earth.

I. The liturgy of the Church is not merely her public and solemn prayer. It is also her popular and authentic teaching. What do we discover from the offices of the two principal feasts of St. Joseph, but especially that of his patronage? We find that the prevailing idea of the Church regarding St. Joseph is that unlimited power has been granted in heaven to the chaste husband of Mary, as it had been granted in Egypt to Joseph, the son of Jacob. In reading the office of this day, we imagine that we hear the Lord saying to us what Pharao said to the Egyptians: "Go to Joseph; I have deposited My authority in his hands; he is the medium of My graces, enjoys a like power of granting with Myself." "He established him lord over his house and manager of all his possessions." This is what the Church repeats exultingly adding: "Alleluia, alleluia!" Such is the judgment of the Church regarding the influence of this admirable saint. Let us consider the offices which he filled.

II. In the days of which we speak, God had on earth a two-fold treasure: Jesus, whom He proclaimed His well-beloved Son, and Mary, who had said of herself by the mouth of the inspired writer: "God has possessed me from the beginning of His ways." To St. Joseph He confided this two-fold priceless treasure. He established him the head of His family, master over His house, steward over the most precious of His possessions, over Jesus, He gave him the authority of a father over His Son, and over Mary the authority of a husband over his wife.

This authority of Joseph was fully acknowledged, for there never was a son more obedient, nor a wife more submissive. We must not imagine that these glorious titles of St. Joseph, to which

so marvelous a power was attached, are, so to speak, disregarded, now that he is in heaven. This can not be. The well-grounded sentiment of the Church is, that the foster-father of Jesus Christ possesses in heaven unlimited power of intercession. While some holy and learned doctors have taught that Mary approaches the throne of her Son, not as a suppliant, but as a sovereign, not to ask, but to command, others have said, speaking of St. Joseph, that the prayers of such a husband and father amount to commandments regarding his spouse and his son; that Almighty God, far from depriving him of his glorious privileges, has enhanced them in his life of glory. They have declared that some saints are invoked for particular necessities, as if the power to assist us were divided among them; but that St. Joseph has received universal power to efficaciously aid us in all our wants of body and soul; that as the Son of God never refused him anything while living under his dependence, now that He is sitting at the right hand of His Father, He, *a fortiori*, grants him all that he asks.

On this ground, the Catholic Church invites us to have recourse to St. Joseph with the same confidence the Egyptians showed to the first Joseph, to whom they said: "Our life is in thy hand; only, let my Lord look favorably upon us, and we will gladly serve the king." (Gen. xlvii.)

Second Point.—We may rely upon the love of this illustrious saint. In the designs of God everything is foreseen. In creating the heart of Joseph, He was creating the heart of the spouse of Mary, and of the foster-father of Jesus. He wished that there should exist in this visible Trinity, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, a conformity of affection resembling that which unites the three adorable persons of the Trinity, invisible and eternal. On the same model as the hearts of Jesus and Mary, the heart of Joseph was formed; and it is from this point of view we should endeavor to conceive, as far as we can, the perfections which adorned it. Some of these were energy, an elevation of sentiment necessary to those who have great destinies to accomplish, but principally sensibility, compassion, a desire for doing good, noble inclinations, developed by continual and extraordinary graces lavished upon it during thirty years through the grateful love of Jesus and Mary. Could they more fittingly reward his devotion toward them than in constantly increasing his charity, and rendering more perfect the resemblance of his heart to their own?

To ask if we may rely upon St. Joseph, if he be willing to help Christians to save their souls, to assist priests and pastors in their labors, to advance the glory of God, would be as much as to ask if we are the objects of the affection of Jesus and Mary, for it is

from their hearts that he derives his feelings toward us. It would be like asking if a good father desires the happiness of his children, for St. Joseph has adopted us all in Jesus Christ, of whom we are the members, and who desires to call us His brethren; it would be to question the zeal of this great saint. From the moment that the angel had revealed to him the mystery of the Incarnation accomplished in his august spouse, his life was a continual contemplation. What did he contemplate, if not the love of God for us, impersonated in the Word made flesh? "God has so loved the world." Ah, how often must that cry of admiration have burst forth from him! When he beheld the divine Infant in the stable, in the arms of His Mother, or in his own; when he lavished upon, or received from Him, most tender caresses; when he saw Him growing up under his eyes, and later on helping him in his humble avocation; when Jesus made known to him His intentions in coming into the world, and what He would suffer for the glory of God and the salvation of souls—was not all this, as it were, new fuel to increase the flame of his love of God and of men?

We have not the right idea of the love of Jesus Christ for us, if we do not know that He neither did nor possessed anything on earth save for our interests. The fact of His choosing a father and mother, and the fact of their possessing such a strong love for our welfare, convey to us the knowledge of Our Lord being forced, in a manner, to yield to their requests those graces which, of ourselves, we could not have obtained. The Church positively declares this in the orison of St. Joseph: *Ut quod possibilitas nostra non obtinet ejus nobis intercessione donetur.* Let us all, therefore, go to Joseph; but let priests remember that they have particular claims to his assistance; for, as they labor for the glory of God, for the purpose of spreading the knowledge of Jesus and Mary, and of saving souls, they realize the most ardent desires of his heart.

Third Point.—How can we secure for ourselves a greater share in the protection of St. Joseph? This great saint comes to the help of those who do not know him, or, though they know him do not honor him, and in this, as in everything else, he is the faithful imitator of Jesus and of Mary. However he, like they, always has stronger affections, and more generous devotedness for those who love him. "I love those who love Me." The more we declare ourselves his children, by invoking him with confidence, the more does his heart act as the heart of a father. It is known how grateful St. Teresa was to St. Joseph for the favors she had received from him. After making mention of this, she adds: "For the love of God, I beg of those who do not believe

me, to make an experiment of it. They will experience how advantageous it is to have recourse to this glorious patriarch, and to honor him in an especial manner."

Let us, therefore, to-day select him as the first of our patrons, the most intimate of our friends, and our most powerful intercessor. God chose him from among all men, to be His faithful co-operator in the accomplishment of the greatest of His designs. *Solum in terris magni consilii coadjutorem fidelissimum.* (St. Bernard.) O Priest of God, most useful will be his co-operation in everything you undertake for your sanctification, and the salvation of your neighbor. Consecrate yourself to him, renew with great fervor the act of your former consecration. Make him the father of your spiritual family, the pastor of your flock. Decide now, in a positive manner, what testimony of love you will offer St. Joseph every year, every week, every day. If you spread his devotion with perseverance, your zeal will be agreeable to him, through the many opportunities you will afford him of assisting souls; and as a reward he will be the means of bringing abundant graces upon you. *Memento igitur nostri, beate Joseph, et tuae orationis suffragio apud tuum putativum filium intercede, sed et beatissimam virginem sponsam tuam nobis propitiam redde.* (St. Bern. Sen., serm. 4 de St. Joseph.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— How great is St. Joseph's influence in heaven! The Church sees a symbol of his power in that of the son of Jacob in Egypt. "God established him master over His house, and governor over all that He possesses." In the days of our saint, God had on earth two treasures really priceless, namely, Jesus and Mary. To St. Joseph He gave over Jesus the authority of a father over his son; and over Mary the authority of a husband over his wife. Never was authority more perfectly respected than his. Is it less regarded in heaven? Thence came the feeling, so well grounded, that St. Joseph has unlimited power over the hearts of Jesus and Mary. The Church, therefore, invites us to turn to the second Joseph with the same confidence which animated the Egyptians when they said to the first Joseph: "Our life is in thy hand, only let my Lord look favorably upon us."

Second Point.—We may rely upon the love of this great saint. The heart of Joseph was modeled on the hearts of Jesus and Mary, for everything in the designs of God is foreseen. Jesus and Mary, in return for the services which Joseph rendered them, ceased not, during thirty years, to labor for his greater perfection. Consider the result.

Third Point.—How we can obtain a greater share in his protection. He entertains particular affection for those who love and honor him. The more we will act as his children, the more will his heart be for us the heart of a father. How many prodigies have occurred in our own days to strengthen what St. Teresa has written on this subject? What further testimonies of our devotion will we show him?

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

MEDITATION LXIII.

JESUS APPEARS TO THE APOSTLES ON A MOUNTAIN OF GALILEE [1]—THE MISSION HE GIVES THEM.

1.—*Nature of the Apostolic Mission.*
2.—*The Saviour Sustains it by His Almighty Power.*

First Point.—Nature of the apostolic mission. "The eleven disciples went into Galilee unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them, and seeing Him they adored." (Matt. xxviii. 16, 17.) Some, however, doubted; this doubt, however, was one of the imagination, brought about by surprise; it was soon to be dispelled. Adore the Saviour with the apostles; believe firmly, and hear with respect all that He is about to say to you. You have a great share in the mission confided to them. "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth; going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to obey all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Through His Resurrection, Jesus entered into possession of His unlimited power. He has it in heaven, whither He will ascend and where He will sit at the right hand of the Father; from heaven He will send the Holy Ghost, and from heaven He will attract to Him His faithful servants, and bring them to reign with Him eternally. He has all power on earth, where He will found the Church, then protect, extend, and perpetuate it.

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[1] Although St. Matthew speaks of the apostles only, it is considered probable, and St. Jerome is of this opinion, that it was on this occasion that Jesus Christ showed Himself to more than five hundred of His disciples. (1 Cor. xv. 6.)

How admirable His power! What other lips would have dared pronounce the words: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth?" They will soon be realized by the mysteries of the Ascension, of Pentecost, and by the success of the apostolic preaching. "And all the kings of the earth shall adore Him, all nations shall serve Him." (Ps. lxi. 11.) O power infinitely amiable! Placed in the hands of Him who deigned to die for us, who will use it for our good only! He does not say: "Go, avenge My death; draw down the weight of My anger upon those who crucified Me." He says, "Go, labor for the salvation of men; draw them from their errors, remit their sins, let them receive through you all the graces which I have merited for them, and the dispensation of which I commit to you. I do not restrict your zeal; I send you to all nations, to all peoples. I will soon ascend into heaven; teach all men how they may ascend to heaven after Me. The means to reach it will be faith, baptism, the observance of all My precepts."

Such was the mission of the apostles; such is your own, O Priest of God! Are you not overjoyed to be called to continue such noble works? Is it not a glorious work to make known the name of Jesus, to induce all men to adore it, to save souls which this good Master has so loved? Who would be unwilling to go the world over to instruct and lead to heaven creatures which He redeemed at the price of His blood? To reign over souls in time, to reign with them in eternity, was the chief work of the goodness and love of Jesus Christ for souls. They who bring to them salvation are, as it were, the triumphal chariot. "Thy chariots are salvation." (Heb. iii. 8.) Return thanks to God for your vocation, and let us remember that its spirit is "to seek and to save that which was lost."

Second Point.—The almighty power of Jesus Christ supports the apostolic mission. "Behold I am with you all days, to the consummation of the world." A God-man makes this promise. He had just said: "All power is given Me in heaven and on earth," and He now adds "and behold I am with you all days to the consummation of the world." St. Matthew ends his Gospel as Ezechiel ends his prophecy: "And the name of the city from that day, the Lord is there." Since that day, behold the name of the Church founded by the Saviour is "the Lord is here." But what is the nature of this presence, and what its effects?

By pledging Himself to be with the apostles to the consummation of the world, Jesus also promises to be with those who will continue their labors. He will be with them to direct them on the right and safe path. Let them remain united to Him, and docile to His inspirations, and they will arrive at the perfection which

God demands of them, and will lead souls to the perfection proper to their state. He will accompany them like a tender Father, providing for all their spiritual and temporal wants. Is He not the source of all good? He will be ever present to protect them from all dangers, as far as the interests of their happiness and of their sacerdotal duties will require. What have we to fear when Jesus will be with us and near us? "Let me beside Thee, and let any man's hand fight against me." (Job, xvii. 3.)

With Jesus, St. Felix found a rampart against his persecutors in a spider's web; whence came the saying: *Praesente Christo, aranea fit murus; absente Christo, murus fit aranea.* He will be present with them with His might and force, enabling them to triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil. They can do all things in Him who strengtheneth them. This irresistible power they find in their faith and confidence in Jesus Christ. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him who believes." "They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength." (Is. lx. 31.) A holy Doctor adds: *Propriam in divinam.* It is their love of Jesus Christ. "Love is strong as death"; it is their prayer offered in the name of Jesus Christ. "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you."

Finally, Christ will be really and corporally present in the Holy Eucharist. The altar, the tabernacle, and the invincible defence of the Church, the power and consolation of the good priest. "The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing . . . though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death I will fear no evils, because Thou art with me. . . . Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me." (Ps. xxii.)

I fancy that to dispel my vain terrors, my good angel says to me what another angel said to a martyr in delivering him from his torments: *Gaudeas et corroboreris in sapientia gratia Domini nostri Jesu Christi. Ecce enim tecum est Dominus. . . . Consumma ergo cursum decertationis tuae, et venies ad Dominum nostrum, accipiens coronam immortalitatis.* (Surius, 7 feb.) It is rather Our Saviour Himself, who, in the silence of the sanctuary, repeats to His ministers through the course of ages: "Behold I am with you all days to the consummation of the world." As long as I have Jesus in the Sacrament of His love, feeble, weak as I am, I shall be all powerful. "I shall want nothing;" nothing shall be able either to injure or to resist me. I fear less because of my profound miseries, than I am full of confidence in His infinite bounty.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Nature of the apostolic mission. Let us adore Jesus Christ surrounded by His apostles, and hear what He says. "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth." What other tongue would have dared pronounce such words? The truth of them has been made evident. The Ascension, Pentecost, the triumph of the Church. He says not, go, avenge My death, but go, save man. Let us bless the Lord for our admirable vocation, and let us remember its spirit: "To seek and to save that which was lost."

Second Point.—Jesus Christ, by His almighty power, is the support of the apostolic mission. "Behold I am with you all days until the consummation of the world." He is present to guide you, so that you may yourself reach and enable others to reach perfection and happiness. He is present to provide you with everything necessary for salvation; He is present to protect you against all peril, according to the designs of His providence. He is really and corporally present in the Holy Eucharist. My confidence in Thee, O Lord, is unbounded, notwithstanding my profound miseries.

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

MEDITATION LXIV.

ROGATION DAYS.

These days of solemn supplication, by which the Church prepares herself to celebrate the Ascension of Jesus Christ, recall to mind two qualities which have always distinguished good priests:

1.—*A Good Priest has Great Love for Prayer.*
2.—*A Good Priest Strives to Inspire the Love and Practice of Prayer.*

First Point.—A good priest has great love for prayer. In prayer we find honor, graces, and consolation.

I. In the eyes of the world it is an honor to approach great men, to converse with them, to be familiar with them. But is there a greater honor, or any worthier ambition, than to entertain a respectful familiarity with God, to speak to Him as friend to friend? For a good priest this is an honor of every moment, for his life

is a continual prayer. Though not always in the actual exercise of vocal or mental prayer, as he always acts for God, seeking to please Him only in everything, he thus accomplishes the precept of the Gospel: *Oportet semper orare.* This prayer is a sacred bond, ever uniting him to God, and holding him in His intimacy.

II. Do you, says St. Bonaventure, wish to patiently bear adversities and trials, overcome temptations, break off disorderly affections; do you desire to know and escape the snares of the devil, excite and strengthen your soul by good thoughts and pious designs? Do you long to eradicate your faults, acquire virtues, raise yourself up to contemplation and to the enjoyment of heavenly delights: Be a man of prayer. We often approach the altar indifferently. If we pray and persist in prayer, grace suddenly comes upon us, our heart expands, the wholesome waters of piety inundate our souls. St. Augustine affirms that our progress in sanctity keeps pace with our progress in the spirit of prayer: *Recte novit vivere, qui recte novit orare.*

A good priest asks nothing from creatures as weak as himself, but from Thee, O God, he expects all. Thou hast put into his hands the key of Thy treasures, prayer, and he uses it to open that treasure and to utilize its stores. He knows that by pledging Thy divine word, "Ask and you shall receive," by binding Thyself with an oath, "Amen, Amen, I say to you," by pledging, as it were, the very person of Thy Son Thou hast made Thyself powerless to reject our prayers. He is acquainted with Thy promises, knows Thy fidelity to accomplish them, and the inexhaustible riches of Thy grace in behalf of all those who invoke Thee. He knows that hadst Thou not promised anything, our confidence alone would oblige Thee to assist and save us; for this confidence of ours honors Thee, and proves to Thee that we well know the meaning of Thy name. Thou dost desire that we begin our prayer by the words "Our Father."

III. Many consolations are attached to this exercise: "Is any of you sad? let him pray." How sweet for a soul, groaning under the weight of its miseries, to throw itself upon the bosom of God as a child into the arms of its father, to speak to Him of its troubles, show Him its injuries, and expose to Him the cause of its alarm. Is not this loving, unreserved confidence the attractive feature of our communications with the Lord? It must be, indeed, that prayer fills the heart with unspeakable delights since it so often changed a bleak desert into a paradise. Were there lives more happy than those of the Pauls and Anthonies? And yet their only consolation was prayer. A certain good priest, dwelling on the most painful contradiction, the most bitter sorrow which might

overtake him, declared that in case of such trials, a quarter of an hour's meditation would suffice him to bear up with the most violent shock, and restore peace to his soul. Hear what St. Bernard wrote to a man who traversed between solitude and the world: *Oh, si semel paululum quid de adipe frumenti unde satiatur Jerusalem degustasses, quam libenter (mundo) suas crustas rodendas relinqueres!*

A good priest always makes his own the cause of the souls confided to his care. He desires that at the Last Day they may speak to the Judge in his favor, that he had borne their infirmities. Hence prayer and preaching have been at all times the most powerful weapons of zealous priests. "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer." (Acts, vi. 4.) The spirit of prayer is a grace of our state, one of the effects of the imposition of hands. I would be unfortunate indeed did I no longer feel its beneficial influence. It is time that I follow the admonition of St. Paul to St. Timothy: "I admonish thee that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the imposition of my hands." (2 Tim. i. 6.)

Second Point.—Good priests have always striven to inspire the love of prayer. The neglect, which has become so common, of this holy practice is one of the most deplorable evils of our age. Prayer is the soul of religion, the great means of salvation given to man. It is an acknowledgment of our nothingness, a declaration that we adore God as the arbiter of all our destinies, that we believe Him powerful enough and good enough to grant what we ask. By praying to Him I acknowledge that I can neither help myself nor receive help from creatures as weak as myself; but that I dare to expect everything from His infinite power and goodness. He is honored according to His desires by this homage of my dependence, of my confidence, and of my love. I am encouraged to hope receiving everything from Him as long as I continue to pray.

St. Augustine, explaining the twentieth verse of the sixty-fifth Psalm: "Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer nor His mercy from me," says: "There is an eternal alliance between the prayer of man and the mercy of the Lord. Do not cease to pray; God will not withdraw His mercy from you." But if I cease to pray, can I entertain any hope of salvation? Should I, in that case, be a worshiper of God? A God to whom I do not pray is a God of whom I have no need, one who would be no God for me. It is by calling upon Thee, O Lord, to help my misery, that I acknowledge Thee to be my God. "In what day soever I shall call upon Thee, behold I know Thou art my God." (Ps. lx. 10.)

The men of our days have ceased to pray, and the knowledge of this wounds the souls of those who love the Church and their brethren. On this account good priests frequently speak on prayer, its power, its necessity. They love to show how easy is its practice, to explain its conditions and different forms. We should read attentively what St. Liguori says in his short treatise on the importance of prayer. He begins it in this wise: "Of all the spiritual works which I have published, this is unquestionably one of the most useful; for prayer is an indispensable and sure means to attain salvation. I wish I could have printed as many copies of this work as there are Christians on earth; I would like it to be in the hands of every man, so that every man without exception might understand how necessary it is to pray to obtain salvation. It grieves me much to know that preachers seldom speak of it in their sermons and exhortations, and that works of piety do not sufficiently insist on this subject." The saint ends by saying: "How many unfortunate souls there are which commit sin and continue to live in sin, and are lost in the end, because they do not pray! And, what is most deplorable, few preachers and confessors make it a duty to inculcate the practice of prayer. As for me, I often say, and I will always repeat, that the whole affair of salvation depends upon prayer; that all spiritual writers in their books, all the preachers in the pulpit, all the confessors in the sacred tribunal, should inculcate nothing as much as prayer. I wish they would repeat continually, pray, pray, and cease not to pray; for if you pray, you are sure of being saved; if you pray not, your damnation is certain."

At the altar beseech Our Lord to infuse into the hearts of His ministers the spirit of grace and prayer. "I shall pour down upon the house of David the spirit of grace and of prayer," so that thence it may spread through the whole body of the Church; at this price can salvation be obtained.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Good priests have always been remarkable for their love of prayer. It gains for them much honor, many graces and consolations. What more honorable than to speak to God as a friend speaking to his friend? This honor is continual, for a good priest always prays, either actually or by intention. In prayer he acquires all the benefits that he desires, patience, light, strength. Our progress in sanctity is always in keeping with our progress in the spirit of prayer. Oh, how sweet for a soul, groaning under the weight of its miseries, to be permitted to cast itself in the bosom

of God, as a child into the arms of his father! Prayer changed bleak deserts into a paradise, and peopled them with saints. The pastor needs to pray for his flock as much as for himself.

Second Point.—Good priests love to inculcate the practice of prayer. The neglect of prayer is one of the evils of our age. Prayer is the soul of religion, and the great means of salvation given to man. There is no religion where there is no prayer. A God to whom I do not pray is one of whom, apparently, I have no need. For me He ceases to be a God. On this account good priests love to speak frequently on this subject. If I inspire my people with the love of prayer, I place in their hands the key of heaven. Let us not fail to read attentively the short treatise of St. Liguori on the importance of prayer.

Ascension of Jesus Christ.

MEDITATION LXV.

MEDITATION OF ST. BONAVENTURE.

THERE is in this work a contemplation on this mystery. (See Vol. I, p. 658.) This subject is treated by the Seraphic Doctor in a manner so devout that we think it useful to give here the substance of his meditation. It may be divided as follows:

1.—*Immediate Preparation for the Mystery of the Ascension.*
2.—*Accomplishment of the Mystery.*

First Point.—Preparation for the mystery of the Ascension. The disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ had become so much attached to Him, on account of His wonderful meekness and mercy, that they could not bear the idea of separation from Him. Although He had told them that it was expedient for them that He should go, the mere thought of a separation filled their hearts with sorrow. On the fortieth day after His Resurrection, He took with Him the holy patriarchs, and the other just whom He had liberated from Limbo, and came to His apostles, who were in the cenacle with His Mother and the other disciples; and as a mark of affection, He would eat with them once more, before going up to His Father in heaven. While full of joy they partook of this last repast with their Master, Jesus said to them: "It is time that I return to Him who sent Me; but you

stay in the city till you be endowed with power from on high. You will afterward go through the whole world to preach My Gospel, baptizing those who will believe; and you shall be witnesses to Me, even to the uttermost parts of the earth." The disciples are in the cenacle; they converse with their Master, they are delighted to be in His presence; nevertheless, they are troubled, for they think of His departure. Consider His Mother, who sat near Him. When this most tender Mother heard the announcement of His departure, she must have leaned fondly on the bosom of Jesus. Surely she was much better entitled to this privilege than St. John. She must have wept bitterly as she said to her Son: "O my Son, if Thou wilt depart from us, take me with Thee!" Our Lord comforted her, saying: "Pray, O Mother, be not overcome with sorrow, for I go to My Father, and it is preferable that you should remain some time longer on earth, to strengthen those who believe in Me, and I will then come to you and take you up to the abode of My glory." At these words the Blessed Mother said: "O my Son, let Thy will be done! I am willing to remain and to die in behalf of those souls which Thou hast redeemed with Thy blood; but do Thou remember me!"

The Lord comforted the holy penitent, Mary Magdalen, and the disciples also, saying: "Let not your heart be troubled, neither have any fear; I will not leave you orphans. I go and come back to you; and I shall be with you always." Finally, He told them all to go up the Mount of Olives, for thence He intended to raise Himself up to heaven. He then disappeared. His Mother and the others went in haste to the summit of the mountain, and there the Saviour appeared to them again.

Second Point.—Accomplishment of the mystery of the Ascension. All the mysteries being now accomplished, the Lord Jesus Christ embraces His Mother, and bids her adieu. She presses Him tenderly in her arms. The apostles, Mary Magdalen, and all the others, fall down prostrate before Him, and with tears in their eyes, they respectfully kiss His divine feet. He commands His apostles to rise, and embraces them; then He begins to ascend by His own power. At this sight the whole assembly prostrate themselves again. Our Lady said: "My blessed Son, remember me." She wept, yet her heart was full of joy, for her Son was ascending to heaven! The apostles and the disciples exclaimed: "Lord, we have left all things for the love of Thee, remember us." Jesus with hands uplifted, with a radiant countenance, wearing the crown and apparel of a king, ascended in triumph toward heaven; and He blessed them and said: "Have courage, persevere to the end, for I will be with you always." And as He ascended

there followed Him that multitude of elect to whom He had opened the way, according to the prophecy of Micheas: "For He shall go up, that shall open the way before them." (Mich. ii. 13.) In this manner did the Lord precede them, clothed in white garments, His face resplendent with beauty and delight. They, filled with joy, sang as they followed Him: "Sing ye to God, make a way for Him who ascendeth upon the west The Lord is His name. Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to Him, and His wonderful works to the children of men. Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, who savest those who hope in Thee, bringing forth Thy people in joy, and Thy elect in gladness. Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and Thy glory above the earth, that Thy beloved one may be made free. We shall enter into Thy house, and in the presence of Thy angels we shall sing to Thee." Glory, praise, and honor to Thee, Christ our Redemptor. Sing to God, ye kingdoms of the earth, sing ye to the Lord." The choirs of the heavenly spirits, each one in the order of their hierarchy, come down from heaven and meet Jesus Christ. They humble themselves before Him who is their sovereign Lord; they accompany Him to heaven, repeating admirable hymns and canticles. Now the patriarchs, who followed Jesus, said as they sang: "Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Thou art worthy, O Lord, of all praise and honor, alleluia! For Thou hast overcome with glory, alleluia. Let the heavens give glory to Thy wonderful works, alleluia, and to Thy virtue, alleluia. Behold the tribes of the Lord now ascend, alleluia, to glorify Thee, and to say alleluia; that we may rejoice in the joy of Thy nation, that Thou mightest be praised with Thy inheritance."

Thus was accomplished the oracle of the prophet who said: "God is ascended with jubilee, and the Lord with the sound of trumpet." The Lord Jesus ascends slowly toward heaven till at last a cloud receives Him out of their sight, and the next moment He is with the angels and the patriarchs in the heavenly abode.

And now His holy Mother, the holy apostles and disciples, could not see Him, yet they remained on their knees, looking up to heaven. Soon, however, they were favored with another apparition, which must have added much to their interior joy. Two angels in the shape of men, dressed in white, stood by them who also said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven." (Acts, 1.) Consider the thoughtfulness of Jesus Christ toward His own. They are hardly deprived of the presence of their Master when He sends two angels to comfort them. When the angels had

spoken, Our Lady requested them to recommend her to her Son and they cheerfully accepted her message. The apostles, Magdalen, and the others addressed to them the same request. After the departure of the angels, they returned to the city. They entered a house on the Mount of Sion, and following the command of the Lord, they remained there expecting the coming of the Holy Ghost.

And I also, O Jesus, my divine King, being full of joy and of hope, rejoicing in Thy glory, I obey Thee and go whither Thy will calleth me. From this moment I raise myself above the things of earth; I wish all my thoughts and affections to be raised to heaven, "where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God." (Col. iii. 1.) I devote myself to labor and to sufferings, which are in this world the share of Thy ministers, as they were Thine. I will wait with patience for the happiness Thou reservest for them at the end of time, in Thy triumphant and last Ascension.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Last preparations for the Ascension. The fortieth day having come, Jesus appears to His disciples assembled in the cenacle, eats with them, and announces to them that He is about to ascend into heaven. What impression does this news of His departure make upon them, especially upon His Mother? He consoles them and bids them go to the Mount of Olives, where He again appears to them.

Second Point.—Accomplishment of the mystery. Jesus bids farewell to His Mother. All the disciples, in tears, prostrate themselves. Then He begins to ascend by His own power. What were the last words of Mary and of the disciples to Jesus? While blessing them He was rising in triumph toward heaven. All the orders of blessed spirits come to meet Him and accompany Him, making the air to rejoice with their canticles. A cloud received Him out of their sight, and still their eyes look up to heaven. Two angels come and put an end to their ecstasy. Then only do they go down from the mountain and return to Jerusalem. And I also, O my King, I devote myself to labor and to sufferings. They are for us, as they were for Thee, the only way that leadeth up to heaven.

MEDITATION LXVI.

THE ASCENSION A SUBJECT OF JOY FOR THE GOOD PRIEST.

1.—*Triumph of Jesus Christ in His Ascension.*
2.—*The Ministry Glorified in His Ascension.*
3.—*Glory which the Ascension Promises a Good Priest.*

First Point.—The Saviour glorified in His Ascension. St. Luke closes the relation of this mystery by the following words, which are also the last of his Gospel: "They, adoring, went back into Jerusalem with great joy." *Gaudebant apostoli propter Domini sui glorificationem, propter diaboli humiliationem, propter judaeorum confusionem, propter generis humani factam redemptionem, propter angelicae ruinae reparationem.* (Hugo. Card.)

The apostles had never known their Master so well as from the day of His Resurrection. Many new traits, not only of His power and of His greatness, but especially of His goodness and of His affection for them, had been revealed to them. Their joy was proportionate to their love; the happiness of Jesus Christ was their own. They had, however, seen only a small part of His glory, for the cloud concealed from their view the heavenly part of His triumph. What they had seen, however, opened a vast field for their meditation. "The Lord," says St. Bonaventure, "followed by the blessed and magnificent escort which accompanied Him, opens the gates of heaven hitherto closed against humankind, enters triumphantly, and, bending before His Father, returns thanks to Him for the victory which He enabled Him to gain over hell, and presents to Him the captives whose chains He had broken; and adds immediately: 'I promised My brethren whom I left on earth to send them the Holy Ghost. I beg of Thee, Father, fulfil My promise; to Thee I recommend them.' Then the Father rising commands His beloved Son to sit at His right hand, who so nobly accomplished His great designs, and gained so much glory for Him. He says to Him that He has given Him all power and judgment; that He may dispose at His will of all things."

The pious Doctor represents afterward to himself the holy patriarchs, the prophets, all the just introduced into the eternal kingdom, and each of the nine choirs of angels, coming in succession to celebrate the praise of the divine King, and to offer Him

their homages. *Omnes exultant, omnes laetantur, omnes cantant, omnes gaudent, omnes jubilant, omnes manibus plaudunt, omnes chorizant, omnes jucundantur, omnes tripudiant.* Then truly the canticle of joy resounded throughout the heavenly Jerusalem, and the "alleluia" was sung in all its streets. Never, from the foundation of the world, was there in heaven such a feast as this; neither shall there ever be one like it, except perhaps on the Day of Judgment, when the elect will enter heaven with their glorified bodies; and this, again, says St. Bonaventure, distinguishes the Ascension from most of the other mysteries. The Incarnation of the Son of God, His Nativity, His Passion, are undoubtedly very great feasts. For us, however, not for Him; in those mysteries He found nothing but humiliations, poverty, sufferings. His Resurrection is a greater feast, both for Him and for us, for in this feast He triumphed over death, and brought about our justification. But even at this He had not sat at the right hand of His Father, on the throne of His glory; the heavens had not yet been opened to receive us, notwithstanding our justification. These things were accomplished on the day of His Ascension. If not for this mystery the Redeemer's glory would have remained imperfect. The soul which sincerely loves Jesus Christ should, therefore, rejoice more on this day than on any other day in the year. Whence the good Master said to His disciples: "If you love Me you would indeed rejoice, because I go to the Father." There is, however, in the Ascension, a special subject of joy for priests.

Second Point.—The priesthood glorified in the mystery of the Ascension. St. Paul unites the Ascension of Jesus Christ with the dignity of his priesthood. "The forerunner, Jesus, is entered for us, made a high priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech." (Heb. vi. 20.) He has entered heaven to reign there at the right hand of His Father, and to accomplish eternally in our behalf the duties of mediator and pontiff. "He is the mediator of the New Testament . . . that they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance." (Ib. ix. 15.) "Whereby He is also able to save forever them that come to God by Him, always living to make intercession for us." (Ib. vii. 25.) O Priest of God, you are the minister of this great King. "Let man so look upon us as upon the ministers of Christ." (1 Cor. iv. 1.) You are the vicar of this divine Pontiff. The Council of Trent gives you this glorious title: *Dominus noster Jesus Christus, e terris ascensurus ad caelos, sacerdotes sui ipsius vicarios reliquit.* (Sess. 14, ch. 5.) You exercise on earth the same priesthood. Through you and with you He adores, He prays, He sacrifices Himself, He negotiates the peace and salvation of the whole world. How dis-

tinguished the favors you enjoy in consequence of this august ministry. Jesus places you here on earth as His vicegerent. "He who heareth you, heareth Me." He confides to you the care of His glory, the treasures of His grace, leaving you the honor of distributing them to His people. You wield His power. "You open and no one shutteth; you shut and no one opens." "Whatever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven, and whatever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven." He who raised Himself up to the highest place of heaven descends every day into your hands. He permits you to touch Him, to receive Him for your nourishment, to bestow Him upon mankind. And what shall we say of the reward He destines for you? "If any one will minister to Me, My Father will glorify him."

Third Point.—Glory which the mystery of the Ascension promises to the good priest. The priestly ministry is a continual immolation of self, an acceptance of all kinds of sorrows in the cause of God and that of souls. To nature there is nothing so repugnant, but blessed is its end. For the theater of His triumph Jesus chose the place of His humiliations. At the foot of the Mount of Olives the disciples beheld Him in His agony: from the summit of that mountain they see Him rising toward heaven. He wishes them to be penetrated with the thought that there is no proportion between the afflictions of time and the joys of eternity. (Rom. viii. 8.) Compare the sufferings of Jesus with His triumph. Behold, He is about to be acknowledged and proclaimed Master of the universe. "King immortal of ages." Rays of glory conceal His wounds. He receives glory for His humiliations, a torrent of delight is the reward of His tears. One ungrateful, rebellious nation had indeed dared to say: "We will not have this man to reign over us," but now His Gospel will be preached in the whole world. The benefits of His Redemption will be announced everywhere, and countless nations will submit to His yoke. In place of vain reproaches and meaningless outrages, He will now receive sincere homage and profound adoration. For one cross, thousands of altars; for one Calvary, thousands of temples erected in His honor. But the mind of man is overpowered, it can find no proportion between the journey and the goal, when the question of duration is considered. Some few hours, some few days, or, for the most, some few years of sorrow and struggle, and then an eternity of rest, of joy and triumph.

The Ascension of Christ explains the intrepidity of the apostles. It enabled them to look calmly on the tortures prepared for them. It accounts for their ardent zeal in going to preach the Gospel. "But they preached everywhere," for, says St. Paul, they do not

lose sight of the spectacle they had witnessed. "Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who, having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame." (Heb. xii. 2.) Here also, O my Lord, I wish to seek for comfort and strength. "As the Lord liveth, I will not leave Thee." I am very willing to suffer for Thee in this world, since for this Thou deignest to promise life everlasting.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The Lord glorified in His Ascension. St. Bonaventure represents to us Jesus Christ entering into heaven, whose gates He throws open. Consider how He is received by His Father, whose designs He had so well accomplished. The other mysteries of Our Lord, His Incarnation, His Nativity are great feasts. They are replete with benefits for us, but not for Christ, since those mysteries brought Him only humiliation and suffering. His Resurrection itself had not yet placed Him on the throne of His glory in heaven. His Ascension completes the stupendous work of the Redemption. This, therefore, is the most joyful day for a soul which loves Jesus Christ sincerely.

Second Point.—The priesthood glorified in the mystery of the Ascension. St. Paul unites the Ascension of Jesus Christ with the dignity of his priesthood. He entered into heaven to fulfil there eternally, in our behalf, the functions of pontiff. O Priest of God, you are the vicar of this pontiff! Through you and with you, He adores, prays, sacrifices Himself. To you He confides the interests of His glory. Think of the reward He has in store for you!

Third Point.—Glory which the mystery of the Ascension promises to a good priest. The Saviour chooses for the theater of His triumph the spot of His humiliations. He wishes us to be thoroughly imbued with the thought that there is no proportion between the affliction of time and the joy of eternity. Let us contemplate our Head. Contrast His glory with His humiliations. How many temples for one Calvary! Hence the apostles never failed in courage since the Ascension of their divine Master. With the remembrance of this event, and with my love for Thee, O my Jesus, I will henceforth seek for comfort and for strength.

Pentecost.

MEDITATION LXVII.

A GOOD PRIEST PREPARES HIMSELF FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THIS FEAST BY ARDENTLY DESIRING TO RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST.

Faith, which reveals to us the mystery of the divine nature, seems in this mystery to discover to us God's love for man, manifesting to us the three persons of the Blessed Trinity devoting special attention to the attainment of the happiness of man. For us the Father by His power created all things, and preserves and directs everything by His providence; for us the Son is Saviour, and the Spirit of God accomplishes the work of our salvation through the graces of sanctification which He lavishes upon us. It is just, therefore, that we should render each of the divine persons particular homage for the blessings we receive. The season of Pentecost is devoted to the discharge of this obligation toward the Holy Ghost. It is He who suggests to the Church the pious devotions which she encourages or commands. Do we sufficiently esteem and practise the devotion which has for its object the direct honor of the third person of the Blessed Trinity?

A good priest observes the last recommendation of Jesus Christ to the apostles: "He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father." (Acts, i. 4.) From Ascension day till Whit Sunday he does not go out of Jerusalem; he remains as closely as possible in the sanctuary of His soul, ever waiting for the promise. He frequently addresses to Him fervent aspirations: *Veni, Creator Spiritus, mentes tuorum visita.* Those ardent desires are excited by the following motives:

1.—*Greatness of the Blessings which he Expects from the Visit of the Holy Ghost.*

2.—*Certainty of Obtaining these Blessings, if he Prepares Himself Properly.*

3.—*His Deep Conviction of their Need.*

First Point.—Great blessings which the Holy Ghost imparts to the souls which He visits. Pentecost, says Bourdaloue, is not like the other festivals, a mere commemoration of a mystery,

which was accomplished once for all; it is for us, when we are prepared, the renewed accomplishment of this mystery. "The same Spirit who came down visibly upon the apostles, comes down now really upon us, not with the same display and prodigies, but with the same effects of conversion and sanctification." He purifies, enlightens, and fills us with the fire of sacred love. He enables us for our salvation, and that of our brethren to realize all the designs of the Lord's mercy. He is pre-eminently the *donum Dei.* It is true that God has given us His Son, and with Him all His benefits. It is the Spirit of God, however, that enables us, by His grace, to know this inestimable gift, giving Him up, as it were, to us through faith, hope, and charity, of which He is the principle in our souls. He applies His merits to us, unites us to Him as His members, infuses into us His life, and thereby seals the full accomplishment of our salvation.

I represent to myself this adorable spirit in the soul of a just man as a spring of life, which through its seven admirable channels irrigates all its faculties, and makes it bear fruits of the most excellent virtues. They are the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. These gifts are very precious, particularly for a priest and a pastor. St. Peter characterizes them by saying: "He has given us most great and precious promises." He calls them promises because they are the grand object of divine promises, and also because they are the pledge of the glory promised to us. He calls them most great and precious, and for this appellation he gives a convincing motive, by affirming that they make us participate in the divine nature, "that by these you might be made partakers of the divine nature." (2 Pet. i. 4.)

They are the gift of a filial fear, which renders the soul timorous in matters of unfaithfulness, inspiring it with sovereign respect for the divine majesty. Through the gift of piety, we find spiritual joy in all the exercises which concern the honor and the service of God; in meditation, in the singing of psalms. The gift of fortitude raises our minds above all the goods and evils of the present life, and enables us to perform the most heroic actions. Such are the three gifts which perfect the will; the four others, which act immediately on the intellect, may be compared, says a pious author (Nouet), to four tongues of fire, which the Holy Ghost uses to instruct and direct us. At times He speaks to us as a friend who counsels a friend in difficult circumstances, pointing out the way to overcome them; at times as a master, teaching us the most noble of all sciences, the science of the saints, by which we judge rightly of all things, bestowing upon them the exact degree of esteem or contempt due to them. In this light we clearly

perceive the nothingness of all that passes; we see in poverty the price of an eternal kingdom, in bodily sickness the health of the soul, in death itself, as it were, a birth or entrance to immortal life. The gift of wisdom preserves us from the direful folly of sinners in matters concerning salvation; it withdraws our affections from creatures and fixes them on God; it lifts up our hearts from earth to heaven: "Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth." (Col. iii. 2.)

The gift of intelligence enables to comprehend the mysteries of faith, and enlightens us so vividly that our faith pierces the cloud, enabling us to see what we believe. It dispels all obscurity from those practical virtues repugnant to nature, abnegation, love of the cross; it aids us to understand how happiness may be found in sufferings, honor in contempt, and how the saints are the only persons who properly understood the love of self. O Priest of God, you have received the Holy Ghost, but do you possess the abundance of His gifts? If through your own fault you received but a small measure of them, why do you delay? Why do you not make the attainment of so great a good the sole object of your ambition? If you seek it sincerely, you will certainly find it in the coming feast.

Second Point.—Our hope of obtaining the blessings of the Holy Ghost is certain. This hope is grounded upon the very nature of the Holy Ghost, upon unquestionable claims, upon most positive promises.

That which is good, says St. Thomas, seeks to spread and communicate itself: *Bonum dicitur diffusivum sui.* Now the Holy Ghost is goodness itself. He is, in a manner, the heart of God, *cujus natura bonitas.* Through Him the Father and the Son love each other, and love us also. To Him are attributed the works of charity. Far from being sparing of His treasures, His delight is to lavish them upon us. Why does He knock at the door of our hearts? He desires most ardently to enter. "If any man shall hear My voice and open to Me the door, I will come into him and will sup with him and he with Me." It might be said that He begs of us to pray to Him, for from Him we receive the suggestion and the will to offer to Him our requests. He does more, He Himself prays in us and for us. (Rom. viii. 26.) How could He reject our prayers and supplications which He Himself suggests and inspires?

When, moreover, we ask for the visit of the Holy Ghost, we claim a good which is ours. It was acquired for us by the labors, the sufferings, and the death of the Son of God; our claims are certain, but, aside from these claims, we have promises which

can not deceive. It will suffice to quote the following: "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke, xi. 13.) Wherefore, the good priest confidently expects, but at the same time continues more ardently to solicit the coming of the Holy Ghost. *Veni Creator Spiritus, mentes tuorum visita.*

Third Point.—He is deeply convinced that he needs the graces of the Holy Ghost, as much for himself as for his work. He knows the poverty of his nature, of itself prone to ignorance and sin. He knows that of himself he can do absolutely nothing in the order of salvation. "No man can say the Lord Jesus but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. xii. 3.) He, therefore, longs to be endowed with that virtue from above which alone is able to lend effective aid to extreme weakness. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity." (Rom. viii. 26.) The weakness of our intellect, so little apt to understand eternal truth; the weakness of our will, so little inclined to virtue; the weakness of our memory, which so easily forgets God; our weakness, our incapacity for action, for suffering, for prayer, for we know neither what to ask, nor how to ask it.

But if every faithful soul needs to receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost—*Reple tuorum corda fidelium*—he on whom the obligations of the priesthood have been imposed ought to receive them with greater abundance. Of the office of the priest, St. Ambrose said: *Munus Spiritus, Sancti, officium sacerdotis.* (De Poenit. l. i, ch. 2.) Every priest ought to be *paraclete* according to the three meanings of this word, a man who intercedes, who exhorts, who instils courage, or revives it when lost. The priest with the Gospel which he preaches, the Sacraments which he administers, the graces attached to his prayer, is the instrument which the Holy Ghost uses for His operations in the Church. Through the Holy Ghost the priest is the light of the world and the salt of the earth; through Him, especially, the priest is a consoler. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . to comfort all that mourn." (Is. lxi. 1, 2.) "Who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we also may be able to comfort them who are in any distress." (2. Cor. i. 4.) Excite an ardent desire within you to receive the plenitude of the graces of the Holy Ghost. In no other way can you better dispose yourself for the festival of Pentecost. *Sitit sitiri*, says St. Gregory Nazianzen; behold the heart of God. Infinite as He is, we can put Him under obligation to us. How so? By asking favors from Him, since He is more willing to give than others are to receive. (Bossuet.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Greatness of the blessings which the visit of the Holy Ghost brings to us. For souls well prepared this feast is the renewed accomplishment of the mysteries of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost is pre-eminently the gift of God. He applies the merits of Jesus Christ to us, unites us to Him as His members, communicates His life to us. He is, as it were, a divine spring, which spreads itself over souls through the seven admirable channels which are His gifts. Three of these perfect our will: they are fear, piety, and fortitude; the four others, counsel, knowledge, wisdom, and intelligence, act immediately upon the intellect.

Second Point.—Certain hope of receiving the blessings of the Holy Ghost. It is grounded upon the very nature of the Holy Ghost, upon the most unquestionable claims, the most infallible promises. That which is good seeks to communicate itself: now the Holy Ghost is goodness itself; He is, as it were, the heart of God. When we ask for His coming, we claim something which is ours, acquired for us through the death of Jesus Christ. We have, moreover, promises which can not fail.

Third Point.—We have much need of the graces of the Holy Ghost. Of ourselves we can do absolutely nothing in the order of salvation. The Holy Ghost alone can efficaciously aid our weakness. Let us ask. God thirsts after our salvation.

MEDITATION LXVIII.

CONDUCT OF A GOOD PRIEST ON THE DAYS WHICH PRECEDE PENTECOST.

1.—*He Removes all Obstacles to the Visit of the Holy Ghost.*
2.—*He Uses Proper Means to Attract the Holy Ghost.*

First Point.—He removes all obstacles to the visit of the Holy Ghost. Sin, the spirit of the world, sensual or too human sentiments.

I. Sin is the great enemy of the Holy Ghost. It grieves Him and obliges Him to withdraw His light; it weakens or destroys the charity which that spirit had poured into our hearts; it is contrary to all His designs. Our first care, therefore, in these days of preparation, should be to strive against sin, which can not

be reconciled with the purity of Him who is, in a manner, the personification of holiness. Our hearts are vessels destined to receive the precious water of His grace. Let us begin by purifying them: *Vas es, sed adhuc plenus es . . . funde, ut implearis; bono implendus es, funde malum. Putas quia melle vult te Deus implere, si aceto plenus es?* (St. Aug. in Ps. 10.) The contrition which He inspires is the first step toward us, to prepare us for His visit. We grieved Him by our ingratitude—He grieves us with wholesome remorse. He opens the eyes of a soul which does not perceive its infidelities, or considers them as a matter of little moment He reminds this priest, His minister and His friend, of a life full of negligence, if not of sin. He asks him if he ought not to grieve bitterly for the faults which he continues to commit, after the many pardons already granted him? He thus excites him to purify his soul with tears of contrition: *Cum a Spiritu Sancto mens visitatur, statim peccata sua plorat.*

II. The spirit of the world is another obstacle to the presence and reign of the Holy Ghost. "What fellowship hath light with darkness." (2 Cor. vi.) Wherefore, Jesus Christ praying to His Father to send the Holy Ghost to His disciples, to sanctify them in truth (John, xvii. 17), represents that they are not of the world, as He is not of the world (John, xiv. 19); that He chose them out of the world (John, xv); that He prays not for the world, which is incapable of receiving this Spirit of truth because it seeth Him not. (John, xiv. 17.) The appreciation of the world, and that of the Holy Ghost, is diametrically opposed; the same, says St. Bernard, is true of the sentiments which they inspire: *Valde sibi adversantur amor mundi et amor Dei.* O Priest of God, forget not that your vocation demands that you struggle against and destroy the spirit of the world. How much harm is done if you, in any manner, participate in its false estimates concerning poverty, riches, or honor! What a scandal if your words give the world to understand that you love what it loves, that you esteem what it esteems! During this week carefully examine your thoughts and your affections, to know whether it be the spirit of truth or the spirit of the world which guides you.

III. At the sight of a corrupted world, God pronounced this irrevocable decree: that His spirit would not remain in man because he is flesh. The flesh and the spirit are two powers which are ever at war. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." (Gal. v. 17.) If we permit the flesh to govern, we are dead; all supernatural and divine life has left us. "But if, by the spirit, you mortify the works of the flesh, you shall live." (Rom. viii. 13.) The following words of the Saviour show how

far disengagement from all human affections should extend in apostolic men: "If I go not, the Paraclete shall not come to you." A strange declaration of the Son of God: *Nisi abstulero vobis carnem, non habebitis Spiritum!* What then, O Holy Spirit? Can it be that this adorable flesh, formed by Thyself with the most pure blood of Mary, should be disagreeable to Thy eyes, and prevent Thee from pouring the abundance of Thy gifts into souls otherwise so well prepared? Jesus, however, wishes to teach us that these men, destined to sanctify the world, were to be deprived of His sensible presence, and of the human joy which that presence afforded them, before being fit to receive the plenitude of the graces of the Holy Ghost: *Nisi carnis praesentia vestris subtrahatur affectibus, spiritualis gratiae plenitudinem mens occupata non admittet.* How, then, could a sensual man, ever seeking self-indulgence, flatter himself to receive His visits and His consolations! *Audeat ergo qui carnem rapit qui carnem fovet, illam, consolationem supernae visitationis expectare!* (St. Ber. serm. de Asc.) I know the obstacles to the reception of the blessings which I desire; with the help of Thy grace, O my God, I resolve to free myself from them.

Second Point.—The proper means to attract the Holy Ghost. These we find mentioned in the last words of the Saviour to His disciples when He was about to ascend to heaven, and in their faithful obedience to His precepts. He had said to them: "Stay you in the city till you be endued with virtue from above." This was to recommend to them three points: To stay in Jerusalem, in the city; to stay there with a calm, quiet mind, stay, *sedete;* to persevere in their expectation "till you be endued with virtue."

The apostles obey. "Leaving the Mount of Olives, they return into the city, enter the cenacle, and here they were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus." (Acts, i. 14.) Behold them sequestered from the world, living in a dwelling which, for them, was full of solemn and holy recollections! In this assembly there exists the most perfect union, and peace is the consequence of this union. They all pray with the same intention, they all pray with equal ardor. Eight, nine days have passed away, and they have not yet seen the accomplishment of the promises of Jesus Christ, but their constancy is not shaken; they continue to pray. These were proper dispositions for the reception of the Holy Ghost: *Descendit Spiritus super unanimes, sedentes atque orantes; diligit hic Spiritus unitatem, amat pacem, diligit concordiam.* (St. Laur. Just. in Pent.) Mary was the bond of this union, the soul of this prayer. Ah, how powerful were her sighs to engage her holy Spouse to come down and to fill with His graces those who were soon, through Him, to convert

the universe: *Per Mariae suspiria et orationes Spiritu Sancto repleti sunt apostoli.* (Dyon. Carth. de Laud., B. v, l. iv.)

I must now prepare for the visit of the Holy Ghost. This should be, as far as possible, a week of recollection and solitude: *Si praeparas aurem interiorem, fuge curam exteriorem.* (St. Ber.) A week of penance and of humble repentance, so that my unworthiness may not be an obstacle to a visit so necessary; I should live in union and charity with my fellow beings, banishing from my heart all bitterness, and endeavoring to prepare souls for the blessings which I expect; my life this week should be a life of recollection and fervent prayer, according to the counsel of a pious interpreter of Scriptures: *Si ad illam internam et supernam dulcedinem inhias, si ad Spiritus veritatem suspiras, audi quid tibi divinitus praecipiatur; Dilata os tuum, et implebo illud.* (Rich. Vict.)

Represent to yourself Jesus in the midst of the Jews, standing and crying out: "If any man thirst let him come to Me and drink." (John, vii. 33.) He had said, too: "The water which I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting." (John, iv. 14.) Pray to God through the mediation of Mary, let your confidence be unbounded; her intercession never fails, and is particularly assured when we ask for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, for it was to obtain them for us that she was made His spouse and given to us as a mother.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Remove all obstacles to the visit of the Holy Ghost. Sin, the spirit of the world, affections too human. Our souls are the vessels destined to receive the precious water of grace; let us begin by purifying them. We have grieved the Holy Ghost. He grieves us by remorse, desiring to pardon us. The spirit of the world is entirely opposed to the Holy Ghost. Let us struggle against concupiscence of the flesh; if we suffer it to master us, we shall die; if we master it by works of the spirit, we will live. The apostles themselves needed to be deprived of the presence of Jesus Christ whom they loved with too human affection.

Second Point.—The proper means to attract the Holy Ghost. Withdraw from the world, abide in peace, persevere in hope and in prayer. Be recollected, contrite for your sins, perfectly united with your fellow beings; implore and confide in the mediation of Mary.

Pentecost.

MEDITATION LXIX.

DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST UPON THE APOSTLES.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons Mentioned.*
2.—*Hear what they Say.*
3.—*Consider what they Do.*

First Prelude.—"When the days of Pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in the same place; and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were, of fire, and it sat upon every one of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost; and they began to speak with divers tongues. . . . And when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and they were confounded in mind. . . . Some were amazed and wondered. . . . but others mocking, said: These men are full of new wine . . . . Peter spoke, and at this first discourse three thousand persons were converted." (Acts, ii.)

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the city of Jerusalem; imagine you see the cenacle on Mount Sion.

Third Prelude.—Ask the Holy Ghost to grant you the grace which the Church will ask of Him with so much devotion during this week: *Veni, Sancte Spiritus—Accende lumen sensibus, infunde amorem cordibus.*

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. Behold the apostles in the cenacle an instant before the accomplishment of the mystery. Their countenances are aglow; they pray with great fervor, kneeling, standing, in silent meditation, or with eyes and hands lifted up toward heaven. They do not yet know the greatness of the benefit they expect; they, however, desire the Holy Spirit ardently, for they know that He is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus, their good Master, who comes to take His place with them, and compensate them for the deprivation of His visible presence. Behold Mary absorbed in profound recollection; ask with her what she is asking for you. See with eyes of faith the angels who hover around this holy place and carry joyfully to the throne of God so many pure and fervent prayers. Are your own prayers worthy to be united with theirs? In heaven, contemplate one

God in three divine persons attentive to prayers which are agreeable to Him, and always ready to listen to new supplications. In the city contemplate the multitude of inhabitants, and of the strangers gathered together for the festivities, having come to adore the Lord in His Temple. Is it merely a sense of religion or duty that has drawn this crowd to Jerusalem? All here seem to be swayed by passion or frivolity; it is a striking contrast with the quietness and piety of the cenacle. Yet among so many thoughtless of eternal interests, God discerns upright hearts, which will soon be lighted up with light from on high, and will receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost. He sees some whose fidelity will promptly rise to eminent holiness; for out of this agitated multitude will rise that Church of Jerusalem which will be forever the model of all churches. Wonderful indeed will be the work of the Spirit of God! *Veni, Creator Spiritus.*

Second and Third Points.—Consider the actions; hear the words. "Suddenly there comes a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house." A globe of fire appears, which is divided in the form of fiery tongues, which rested upon every one present in the cenacle. Consider their emotions and feelings at this moment, the sudden illumination, the holy exultation! Heavenly inspirations fill hearts hitherto so heavy, so slow to believe and to love! In the narrative, however, of this mystery, each word should be considered.

There comes a sound. God wishes us to be attentive to the operations of His grace. "Suddenly." The visit of the Holy Ghost has no fixed hour; He breathes wherever and whenever He wishes; as you should always desire Him, you should always expect Him. Unhappy is the soul which is not recollected when He comes to honor it with His presence, and enrich it with His treasures. "From heaven." We can expect but little from earth; it is from heaven that every good gift and every perfect gift comes to us. (Jam. i. 17.) "As of a wind." You may here consider the wind as symbolical of the Holy Ghost; its sudden rush, its invisibility, the change it operates in the atmosphere. "Mighty wind." When a soul is carried away by passions, when it is tepid and sensual, how strongly it has to be shaken before it can rise! "It filled the whole house where they were sitting." This house is the Church, which feels everywhere the presence of the Holy Ghost. It is your own soul. He will fill it all, if you open it to His inspirations, but He wishes to find you in a state of calmness. "Sitting." The apostles receive that which had been promised to them, because they faithfully observed the commands of Christ. "Stay you in the city."

The Holy Ghost manifests Himself by still another symbol: "There appeared to them parted tongues, as it were, of fire." Fire, which of all the elements is the most noble, has power to illuminate, to warm, and to purify. The Holy Ghost acts like fire; as the spirit of truth, He illuminates us; as the Spirit of holiness, He purifies us; as the Spirit of fortitude, He animates us, strengthens our faculty, replenishes us with zeal. The fiery tongues express the marvelous effects which the Holy Spirit will work by the teaching of the apostles and that of their associates in the evangelical ministry. These effects appeared at once. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak." As soon as these men, hitherto so timid, have received the Holy Ghost, they open the doors of the cenacle which they had kept carefully closed; they appear in the Temple, on public squares, and preach Jesus Christ in the midst of the very nation which had so cruelly crucified Him. In an instant, the event of the cenacle is the event of the whole city. A large crowd has gathered together. "It is confounded in mind, because that every man heard them speak in his own tongue." The amazement is general. "Behold are not all that speak Galileans? and how have we heard, every man our own tongue wherein we were born? What can this be? "But others mocking, said, these men are full of new wine."

Hear now, with particular attention, the sermon of St. Peter. Whence came to him this knowledge, this bold, captivating eloquence: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you as you also know . . . you, by the hands of wicked men, have crucified and slain. . . . Whom God has raised up. . . . Whereof all we are witnesses." And all that did happen, and all that happens to-day, is but the exact accomplishment of the prophecies. "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know most certainly, that God hath made both Lord and Christ, this same Jesus whom you have crucified." This inspired language excites wholesome compunction within many souls; they exclaim: "What shall we do, men and brethren? But Peter said to them: Do penance and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." They were obedient to this word, and to the grace which accompanied it, and three thousand were converted and received baptism.

Praying to the apostles and Mary; ask them to intercede for you. Pray to the Holy Ghost Himself, using the second form of prayer of St. Ignatius; go slowly over the form of supplication: *Veni, sancte Spiritus, reple tuorum corda fidelium, et tui amoris in*

eis ignem accende. Every day at Mass during this octave, the Church will bid you consider that prayer, and direct you to genuflect while reciting it.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. In the cenacle a moment before the accomplishment of the mystery. The apostles, Mary, the angels. In heaven the adorable Trinity, attentive to their prayers. In the city. What a contrast between the multitude and the assembly in the cenacle. Out of this multitude, however, the primitive Church of Jerusalem will be formed, to remain forever the model of all the churches.

Second and Third Points.—Hear the words; consider the actions. Whence came that great sound, what are its effects? It came suddenly. Unhappy is the soul which is not prepared when the Holy Ghost visits it. It is a wind; mighty. It fills the whole house. What house is this? There is fire. It gives light, purity, and warmth; it has the form of tongues, typifying the apostolic ministry. Marvelous change in those men hitherto imperfect and timid. Sermon of St. Peter; its success. Colloquy with the apostles, with Mary, with the Holy Ghost Himself.

Whit-Monday.

MEDITATION LXX.

THE CLERGY, AND THE WHOLE CHURCH WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF THE CLERGY, SANCTIFIED BY THE HOLY GHOST.

1.—*The Holy Ghost Sanctified the Apostles and all Apostolic Men.*
2.—*Sanctification of the Church through the Apostles and Apostolic Men.*

First Point.—The Holy Ghost sanctifying the apostles and their successors. When we consider what the third person of the Blessed Trinity did for the apostles on the day of Pentecost, we are apt to dwell on the abundance of wonderful graces which transformed them suddenly into so many vessels of election, and made them at once accomplished ministers of the Gospel. This is the miraculous aspect of the mystery. It is, however, more profitable to consider it in its practical aspect, by asking ourselves the reason

of a change so marvelous. It was undoubtedly their fidelity in correspondng with all the graces offered them.

Sudden as was the transformation of men who were themselves destined to transform the world, this transformation had its progressive steps. We see that the Holy Ghost prepares their hearts by common graces. The apostles make the best use of these graces, and they are followed by other extraordinary favors.

"Stay in the city." Behold the inception of that grand work which excites so much admiration on this day. The apostles receive the grace of recollection, of isolation from the world. This is ordinary grace. The apostles, however, use it to its fullest extent. Jesus had told them to stay in Jerusalem, and there they remain. Their obedience is rewarded by a more efficacious grace, which, however, is refused to no one, the grace of prayer. Their obedience to the spirit of prayer obtains for them the spirit of fervor and of zeal, figured by those tongues of fire which rested upon their heads. This is indeed an extraordinary grace, the result of fidelity to preceding graces. Being now filled with the Holy Ghost, they no longer try to control the fire which burns within them. They publish aloud the wonderful works of God, the mission, the death, the Resurrection of the Saviour. To holy words they unite good works. With almost incredible hardships they found the Church, and their fidelity to those ever-increasing graces obtains for them the crowning grace of all, namely, the grace to suffer and die for Jesus Christ.

Because they obeyed divine inspiration by staying ten days in retirement, they became men of prayer; because they had prayed well, they became zealous preachers, powerful in works and in words; their constant zeal in propagating the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ brought them the crowning grace of being martyred for Him; and because they were on earth the first martyrs of the Church militant, they are now in heaven the illustrious chiefs of the Church triumphant. Thus is formed the character of saints, thus the character of the holy priests is moulded on that of the apostles. Let us remember the lives of St. Francis de Sales, St. Francis Xavier, St. Alphonsus Liguori.

Such is the ordinary action of the Holy Ghost in the sanctification of apostolic men. He bestows His grace in proportion to its use. In the beginning it is like dew, falling drop by drop; but when received with gratitude it becomes an abundant rain which brings forth fruits of solid virtue and perfection. In the beginning it is merely a zephyr; but if the heart be properly prepared, it soon becomes a mighty wind. I clearly see the cause of the barrenness of grace within me. I have often celebrated

the feast of Pentecost, and yet I am so little acquainted with the ways of the Holy Ghost! This would not be the case had I turned His gifts to advantage, and always followed His inspirations.

Second Point.—The Holy Ghost sanctifying the Church with the co-operation of the apostles and apostolic men. It had been foretold that God would send His Spirit, that a second creation should be affected, that the face of the earth should be renewed. (Ps. ciii.) "That that which was dry land should become a pool, and the thirsty lands springs of water." (Is. xxxv. 7.) These prophecies began to be accomplished in a striking manner on the day of Pentecost.

The words of fire which issue from the apostles, enlighten, inflame, and change a great number of those blinded Jews. As soon as they have professed the faith, they are scarcely recognizable. The transformation is complete. Selfishness, covetousness, all the vices have disappeared, and are substituted by virtues hitherto unknown in the world. "And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul; neither did any one say that aught of the things that he possessed was his own." (Acts, iv. 32.) From Jerusalem, wherein strangers from every nation had assembled, the voice of the apostles resounded through the world. "Their sound has gone forth into all the earth." (Rom. x. 18.) *A die Pentecostes imbres charismatum, flumina benedictionum, omne desertum et universam aridam rigaverunt.* (St. Leo, Ser. i. de Pent.)

There is nothing through all the ages of the Church so admirable as this continuous action of the Holy Spirit, sanctifying the lay people through the clergy, the flocks through the pastors, and sometimes whole nations through one priest replete with apostolic zeal. Consider what God accomplished through the Dominics, the Francis Xaviers, the Vincent Ferrers, the Anthonies of Padua! We are the dispensers of His grace, the instruments which He uses to introduce truth into the minds and charity into the hearts of people. We received Him in ordination, not so much for ourselves as for the sake of the obligations imposed on us. To the waters of baptism He gives power to purify; to all our sacramental forms, virtue to operate. We obtain His grace by prayer—we impart this grace to others in the administration of the Sacraments. It is the Holy Ghost who remits sins, who instructs, admonishes, consoles, is the origin of whatever good we accomplish in the discharge of our duties. Reflect how you respond to the desire He has to save and sanctify souls through your labors! Do you preach with the aid of His light? "According as the Holy Ghost gave

them to speak." Do you receive your inspirations from the Holy Ghost and from Him alone? Since you have the honor of being associated with Him through the communication of His gifts, you should co-operate, with charity and meekness, in this work of mercy. What a sad contrast to see the ministers of mercy acting harshly in the discharge of His duties; to hear the organ of that Spirit which is sweeter than honey speaking with bitterness! Ask yourself if you fervently invoke Him at the beginning of your principal actions, particularly at the beginning of your ministerial labors, under the full conviction that without Him you can do nothing. *Sine tuo numine.* Ask yourself if you give up your own ideas in order to be guided by the Spirit of God alone in imitation of His true servant. "Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. viii. 14.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The Holy Ghost sanctifying the apostles. The marvelous change in the apostles was due to their fidelity to correspond to grace. The first they received was a grace of recollection "Stay in the city." They spent all their time in the cenacle. As a reward for this retirement they receive the gift of prayer, and through prayer they receive the spirit of fervor, of zeal, of constancy. Such is the ordinary conduct of the Holy Ghost.

Second Point.—The Holy Ghost sanctifies the Church through the apostles. It had been foretold that a second creation would take place; that the face of the earth would be renewed by the Holy Spirit. These prophecies are accomplished. What did the apostles and their successors do? We are the appointed dispensers of the graces of the Holy Ghost. To the waters of baptism He gives power to purify souls, to sacramental forms He gives virtue. Let us ask ourselves if we respond to the desire He has of sanctifying souls through our labors.

Whit-Tuesday.

MEDITATION LXXI.

CONSOLATIONS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Jesus Christ had often declared to the apostles that this present life would be for them full of sorrows and distress, that in exchange for the good they would do they should expect from the world only annoyance and persecutions. He had announced to them an affliction, saying that He was about to leave them to return to His Father. Their hearts were full of sadness; to console them, He promised to them the Holy Spirit. They should not be orphans. (John, xiv. 18.) And their consolation would be so great that its possession would offset the deprivation of the visible presence of their Master. The special office of the Holy Ghost is that of consoler.

1.—*The Holy Ghost our Consoler.*
2.—*To whom He Gives His Consolation.*

First Point.—The Holy Ghost our consoler. He consoles us through His gifts; the confidence which He inspires; His reprimands.

I. Not to speak of the gift of a good conscience, which the Scripture compares to a continuous feast, and which is also a fruit of the Holy Ghost, this Holy Spirit gives us two other gifts which impart much consolation. Through the first He enlightens our minds regarding Jesus Christ; through the second He teaches us what we ourselves are in Jesus Christ. The Saviour had said to the apostles: "When the paraclete comes whom I will send you from the Father, the spirit of truth . . . . He shall give testimony of Me." (John, xv. 26.) The descent of the Holy Ghost was a new revelation concerning Jesus Christ and His mysteries. If hitherto they had known Him in the flesh, they henceforth knew Him in a manner incomparably more perfect. "If we have known Christ according to the flesh; but now we know Him so no longer." (2 Cor. v. 16.) The same must be said in regard to us. There is a great distinction between a common faith and the faith which has received the enlightenment of the Holy Ghost. When a soul has gained the pre-eminent knowledge of the charity of Jesus Christ; when she measures, so to say, the breadth and length

and height and depth of His love for us, she finds therein an inexhaustible source of consolations for every situation in which she may find herself. The second testimony which the Holy Ghost gives us rejoices our hearts, and this is, that we are the children of God, and consequently His heirs, brothers of and co-heirs with Christ. "For the spirit Himself gives testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God; and if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs of Christ." (Rom. viii. 16, 17.) We have received the spirit of adoption; in Him it is that we cry out in our distress, He Himself says within us: "My Father, my Father." (Gal. vi. 6.) We may indeed lose the inheritance of our heavenly Father; and this thought caused the saints to tremble. We can also secure it for ourselves, because it has been acquired for us, and because we already possess a guarantee of it, the Holy Ghost Himself. "You were signed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance." (Eph. i. 13, 14.) Wherefore, the careful soul is enabled to moderate her fears, or even banish them entirely, through the charity of God which is in her: "Perfect charity casteth out fear." (1 John, iv. 18.) The careful soul rests in peace on the bosom of her Father.

II. The confidence of that soul is the cause of her happiness. The Holy Ghost, to induce her to forget herself, makes known to her the corruption of her nature, and its peccability. He at the same time shows her so clearly the power of God, His fidelity to His promises, His goodness and tenderness for those who invoke and love Him, that her vivid faith gives substance and reality to that which is as yet mere hope. "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for." (Heb. xi. 1.) It is an anticipated fruition. The heart delights in the consideration of truths whose knowledge satisfies her mind.

III. The Holy Ghost affords us consolation even by His very reprimands. "His mission in forming and sanctifying the Church is to convince the world of sin and of justice and of judgment." (John, xvi. 8.) He continues this struggle. In the faithful, but particularly in priests, He tries to extirpate the remnants of this spirit of the world, which is prolific of sin, injustice. Now to be entirely free from it, we must have attained perfection. He, therefore, complains to us of the voluntary infidelities which offend His infinite holiness. "He will convince the world of sin." He complains of our pretended good works, in which there are to be found so many defects, perhaps so many selfish motives. He complains of our false judgments. Instead of thinking as He does regarding many matters, we think as the world does; instead of adhering to truth, we feed upon vanity. All this prevents the

Holy Spirit from establishing His reign within us, and of raising us to the perfection and happiness which have been destined for us. Are not His complaints and His reproaches an evidence of His love? Would you prefer that He remain silent? This is the terrible chastisement He inflicts on those whom He is about to leave to themselves. O Holy Spirit, never inflict this punishment on me! "O Lord, be not Thou silent, O Lord, depart not from me." (Ps. xxxiv. 32.) In these apparent rigors, I see and I bless Thy tenderness. "Thy rod and Thy staff, they have comforted me." (Ps. xxii. 4.)

Second Point.—For whom are the consolations of the Holy Ghost? They alone are comforted who are in affliction. "Blessed are they that weep, for they shall be comforted." *Qui non gemit ut peregrinus, non gaudebit ut civis.* A soul satisfied in exile, looking for all its joys therein, constantly engaged in shirking inconveniences, need not expect any favor from the heavenly wisdom. "It is not found in the land of them who live in delights." (Job, xxviii. 13.) The consolations of the Holy Ghost are ordinarily the reward of a generosity which is ready to sacrifice everything for the glory of God. The apostles were beaten with rods for preaching Jesus Christ, and "they went from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." (Acts, v. 41.) The first Christians, by embracing the faith, resigned themselves to sufferings and to death; and St. Luke speaks only of the consolations with which they were filled. "Now the Church was filled with the consolation of the Holy Ghost." (Acts, ix. 31.)

We may distinguish three visits of the Holy Ghost. Visits of compassion to cure us; in these He strives against the blindness of our mind, and the hardness of our heart. Visits of trials to purify us. "He shall purify the sons of Levi, and shall refine them as gold and as silver." (Mal. iii. 3.) He desires to dwell within our souls; but if He sees them governed by sensuality and selfishness, He allows us to feel the weight of our miseries, obliging us to have recourse to Him. Visits of friendship and of affection, which may unite us to God more intimately, and give us courage to suffer not only with patience, but with joy. The two first visits prepare us for the third. The more obedient we are to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, the better disposed we are to receive the abundance of His consolations. We are still, it is true, in possession of His gifts; but they are ineffectual because of our dissipation of mind, our irregular affections, our numerous infidelities. We resist, we grieve the Holy Ghost; of this He complains. How, then, can we expect Him to console us? Let us purify our hearts

by vigilance and mortification; fervor and charity will develop in us, and we will soon experience how sweet is the Lord.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—How does the Holy Ghost console us? By the gifts He gives us, the confidence He inspires, nay, sometimes, by reprimands. He gives us two gifts full of consolation—knowledge of Jesus Christ, and of our relations to Him. The descent of the Holy Ghost was for the apostles another revelation of Jesus Christ. He, moreover, reveals to the Christian soul its relations to the Saviour. Great peace comes to our soul through the confidence He inspires, by revealing to us the power, the fidelity, the goodness of God. The complaints and reprimands which He utters are another consoling evidence of His love.

Second Point.—For whom are the consolations of the Holy Ghost? They alone are consoled who are afflicted. "Blessed are they that weep." The first Christians, in embracing the faith, resigned themselves to suffering, and they were filled with consolation. Let us not resist the Holy Ghost, let us purify our hearts and overcome ourselves, and we will soon experience how sweet is the Lord.

MEDITATIONS ON THE VARIOUS MYSTERIES, THE DIFFERENT SEASONS AND FEASTS OF THE LITURGICAL YEAR.

PROPER OF THE SAINTS.

February 2.

MEDITATION LXXII.

PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(Vol. II, page 55.)

February 10.

MEDITATION LXXIII.

ST. SCHOLASTICA.

This illustrious virgin sister of St. Benedict was, like himself, favored early in life with extraordinary graces, and gave herself to God in her childhood. When she became of age, she retired to Monte Cassino and founded there a convent for the persons of her sex, at a distance of five miles from her brother's monastery. Every year brother and sister visited each other, in order to edify each other by pious conversations. At the time of their last interview, after spending the day in singing psalms and speaking of God, they took their evening repast together. St. Scholastica, who knew that her end was near, urged her brother not to leave her, and to continue with her, during the night, a conversation so useful to her soul. Benedict having rejected this request as a grievous infraction of religious discipline, Scholastica betook herself to prayer, and immediately, although the heavens had been quite serene, a great tempest arose, claps of thunder were heard, and a torrent of rain fell from the clouds making it impossible for Benedict to return to his monastery. They, therefore, passed the whole night conversing about God and the glory of the elect. Three days afterward Scholastica died, and her brother saw her soul going up to heaven in the form of a dove. Let us learn from this saint:

1.—*How much We ought to Love Solitude.*
2.—*What Advantages there are in Holy Conversations.*
3.—*What Great Power is Found in Innocence.*

First Point.—Love of solitude. St. Scholastica had hardly heard of the retirement of her brother from the world, than she felt a great desire to imitate him. She had already attempted to lead a solitary life in the house of her parents, but God had great designs upon her; many virgins were called, after her example, to give themselves up to the divine King. She had found God, she could relish Him alone. Her soul thirsted after Him who is the very source of strength and of life. How she welcomed the day on which she could say in truth: "Lo, I have gone far off, flying away, and I abode in the wilderness." (Ps. liv. 8.) According to St. Lawrence Justinian, to seek solitude ardently, and to maintain one's self in it with constancy, is the most efficacious means of obtaining the habit of meditation and interior life.

To converse with God the mind should be calm; and solitude is a tranquil haven. To approach the center of purity, the heart should be pure; and solitude is the grave of the passions which defile it; it initiates us, as it were, into the life of angels. Grace is necessary in order to pray well, but nowhere is it found so abundantly as in solitude, for here is the place in which the Holy Ghost wishes to find us, when He wishes to speak to our hearts. "I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart." (Osee, ii. 14.) "Know you," says Father Nouet, "why God does not make you more frequent and more familiar visits? It is because He either finds you in the world, or because He finds the world in you. He loves to converse in secret, and your soul is hardly ever alone."

Second Point.—Great advantages of spiritual conversations. Only once in the year did St. Scholastica enjoy the happiness of conversing with her brother, and that conversation sufficed to inflame her soul and guide it in all the ways of perfection. The last time she enjoyed this favor, was for her, as it were, a proximate preparation for death. Great are the fruits which may result from pious conversations! An evidence of this we find in the conversations of St. Ignatius with St. Francis Xavier, of St. Francis de Sales with Madame de Chantal, of St. Paul with Titus and Timothy; and let us add of Jesus Christ with His apostles, with the Samaritan woman, Zaccheus, Mary Magdalen, and others. What is there more touching than what is related by St. Augustine? "The time was not distant when my mother was to leave the world. One day she and I, while at a house by the sea-

shore, alone, and without witnesses, conversed together with inexpressible suavity. Forgetting the past, that we might think only on the blessed days to come, we sought in Thy presence, O God, who art unchangeable truth, what will be that happiness which the eye of man has not seen, and which the heart of man is incapable of conceiving. Our hearts became, as it were, wide open to receive the outpourings of that supreme felicity of which Thou art the source. We lifted up ourselves, up even to Thee, by speaking of Thee and admiring Thy works. We already tasted to some extent the delights of the life to come, through the upward flights of our desires."

The conversation of saints is in heaven. (Phil. iii. 2.) Where is mine? They never tire speaking of God, and hearing others speak of Him. Have I a taste for devout conversations?

Third Point.—Power of innocence. David exclaims: "How good is God to Israel, to them that are of a right heart!" (Ps. lxxii. 1.) And in another psalm: "Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? The innocent in hand and clean of heart." (Ps. xxiii. 3, 4.)

A pure soul that is not conscious of any sin feels itself at peace in the presence of God; from Him it expects everything. Whoever possesses the heart of God possesses, as it were, His power. St. Scholastica wishes to prolong through the entire night a conversation which increased the fervor of her love. A miracle seems necessary to accomplish this object; see with what candor she asks for it, how easily she obtains it! She leans her head on the table, and waters it with her tears, and the instant that she raises it, the rain pours down in such abundance that Benedict cannot leave her. What amiable naïveté in her answer to her brother! He wishes to rebuke her because of the infraction of religious discipline which he had committed through her action; he said to Scholastica: "God forgive you, sister, what did you do?" "You are very good indeed, my brother," she replied, "but God is better than you are; I made you a request, and you refused me; I had recourse to God, and He heard me. Go away now if you can." But how didst thou, a timid virgin, how didst thou dare resist thy brother, the great Benedict, whom thou regardest as thy oracle? How didst thou learn that there might be something better in that moment than the observing of the strict rule which he had given, and which he was bound to sustain by his example? Ah, how much light there is in a pure soul, and how great its power with the heart of God!

Let us meditate upon and often consider the prayer appointed by the Church to be read on this day. "O God, who, in order to

make manifest the path of innocence, didst cause the soul of Thy blessed virgin Scholastica to enter heaven in the form of a dove, grant us, by the aid of her merits and prayers, to live so innocently that we may be found worthy to reach the joys of everlasting life."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Love of solitude. Scholastica had found God, Him alone she could relish. How she welcomed the day on which she was permitted to say: "I have gone far off, flying away, and I abode in the wilderness!" To seek diligently for solitude and maintain one's self in it with constancy is the most efficacious means to possess interior life. Solitude is a tranquil haven; it is the grave of passions, it facilitates the practice of prayer, and initiates us into the angelical life.

Second Point.—Great advantages of spiritual conversations. Remember the conversations of St. Scholastica with St. Benedict, of St. Ignatius with St. Francis Xavier, of St. Paul with Titus and Timothy, of St. Monica and St. Augustine. The conversation of saints is in heaven. Where is mine?

Third Point.—Power of innocence. A pure soul feels itself happy in the presence of God, and presumes to hope for everything from Him. Whoever possesses the heart of God possesses His power. What was Scholastica's wish? With what candor she asked, how easily she obtained!

February 24.—Election of St. Matthias.

MEDITATION LXXIV.

JUDAS' SUCCESSOR CHOSEN.

First Prelude.—The apostles having returned to Jerusalem after the Ascension, withdrew into the cenacle, there to wait for the Holy Ghost, as Jesus Christ had commanded them. The disciples assembled there also; and St. Matthias was one of them. Then it was that Peter, in the midst of the assembly, proposed to fill the place of Judas. Two disciples were presented; all began to pray, and the lot fell upon Matthias, who was associated to the eleven apostles.

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the cenacle, the place of this reunion, already consecrated by the institution of the Eucharist, by the apparition of Jesus after His Resurrection, and soon

to receive a new consecration through the descent of the Holy Ghost.

Third Prelude.—O God, to whom alone it belongs to choose Thy ambassadors and Thy ministers, give me to understand the excellence of this vocation, and grant me the grace, as Thou didst to St. Matthias, to faithfully fulfil all its obligations.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. All the members who make up this assembly, the apostles, the disciples. The whole Church is represented in this place wherein you see its visible head, the teaching body, and a part of the faithful. What peace and charity in this reunion of brethren! You will notice here no trace of intrigue, not a word, not an action denoting the least ambition. Enter into the souls of those who are about to present members for election, or of those who are liable to be elected; you will find in all a quiet humility, holy indifference, and a fear rather than a desire to be raised to a dignity which requires so many virtues and has such great responsibility attached to it. They seek only the glory of God and the advantage of the Church. How high the idea which each one of them has of the mission of an apostle, and particularly of the mission which will soon be intrusted to the successor of Judas! How great should be his holiness in order to repair the scandal, and cause one to forget the frightful fall! If our conscience reproach us with nothing concerning our vocation, if it really was the work of the Holy Ghost, let us bless the Lord for it; but let us often remember the admonition which was addressed to us: *Perfecti esse debent qui divinis mancipantur officiis.*

Second and Third Points.—Consider the actions, hear the words. Peter feels inspired to begin to use the supreme power given him by Jesus Christ. Rising in the midst of his brethren, he speaks with authority, interprets and applies the Scripture with intelligence, and wisely lays down the rules for the election. They listen to him, and execute immediately what he has proposed. Whence come to him this assurance, this sacred learning, this art of governing, this primacy of power and jurisdiction which no one attempts to contest? Is he not that fisherman of Galilee who hitherto knew naught but his ship and his nets? Ah! we know from whom he received the power which he exercises; we still imagine hearing Our Lord saying to him: "Feed My lambs, feed My sheep." The infant Church considers him as holding the place of the Son of God who has gone up to heaven. We already begin to see in the apostles and in their chief the workings of the Spirit which Jesus communicated to them when He breathed on them on the day of His Resurrection.

Peter begins by reminding them of the crime of Judas, the

leader of them that apprehended Jesus. He ought to have been the leader and guide of the disciples of the Son of God, and he put himself at the head of those who crucified Him. It was not that a true vocation had been wanting. He had been numbered with the apostles. Peter next reminds them of Judas' punishment, and finally shows the necessity of finding a successor, another one to take his bishopric. Peter proposes the object of the election, which was the naming of a twelfth apostle who would receive the plenitude of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and would by his preaching, and the sacrifice of his life, testify, not to the Resurrection of Christ only, but also to the truth of all that He had taught and confirmed by this Resurrection. Peter wishes the whole Church to participate in this election; to her indeed it is of paramount interest to have none but saintly pastors! "And they appointed two; Joseph, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias."

After this nomination, in which all concur, they address to God the following prayer: "Thou, O Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two Thou hast chosen, to take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas has by transgression fallen, that he might go to his own place." These last words must have been terrifying to the devout assembly, but particularly to him on whom the choice fell, "that he might go to his own place." What place is this to which Judas went, and which he made his eternal dwelling? What abyss is this from which the holy ministry itself can not save, nay, to the lowest depths of which the same ministry precipitates those who dare profane it? There was here much food for reflection for St. Matthias. "The lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

Let us return thanks to God for our vocation, and consider in what manner we have corresponded with it. Let the election of St. Matthias reanimate our desire to contribute by all possible means to the sanctification of the clergy, which is the first object of the solicitude of the Church. It was principally for the end of obtaining holy priests that she instituted the fasts of the Ember Days, and again it is with a view of obtaining the same result that she addresses to God prayers so fervent in the ordination of her ministers. She daily recommends them to the intercession of Mary, *Sancta Maria . . . interveni pro clero;* and she hastens their entrance unto glory by reciting a special prayer for them in the *missa pro defunctis.* All the work of the Church rests with the priests. From them she expects the praises of her adorable Spouse, the salvation of her children. Let us, therefore, pray and induce others to pray for the priests. St. Teresa used to say to her daugh-

ters: "Ask God for two favors: the first that He may please to give manly courage to the officers of His Church; the second that He sustain them in the battle, and close their ears to the songs of the siren. Imagine not that it is useless to be thus continually engaged in praying for the defenders of God's Church. Believe me there is no prayer either better or more profitable than such a prayer." (Chem. de la perfection, ch. iii.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. Disciples, apostles, the whole Church with its head represented in the cenacle. What peace, what charity reign here! Nothing here denotes ambition. The glory of God, the general good of the Church, are the only sentiments which occupy the hearts and the minds of all.

Second and Third Points.—Consider the actions, hear the words. Peter begins the exercise of the supreme power which he has received. He speaks, they listen to him silently, and immediately carry out his commands. He reminds them of the crime of Judas and of its frightful punishment. He proposes the election, points out its object. Let us beseech Almighty God to send holy priests to His Church; and let us often pray for the clergy.

March 7.—St. Thomas Aquinas.

MEDITATION LXXV.

ECCLESIASTICAL STUDY.

St. Thomas was born of an illustrious family of the kingdom of Naples, at the beginning of the year 1225. From early childhood he showed an extraordinary inclination for study. At the age of seventeen he entered the Order of St. Dominic, notwithstanding the violent efforts made to frustrate his design. The penetration of his mind, the extent of his learning, united to an admirable purity and devotion, deserved for him the appellation of "the angelical doctor." Jesus Christ having said to him one day: "Thou hast well written of Me, Thomas; what reward dost thou desire?" he answered: "None else but Thyself, O Lord." By the order of the Pope Urban IV., he composed the office for the feast of the Most Holy Sacrament. This mystery was the great object of his devotion. He constantly refused the dignities which

were offered to him, and died in 1274. Let us meditate to-day on the important subject of ecclesiastical study.

1.—*Necessity of Ecclesiastical Study.*
2.—*Its Great Advantages.*
3.—*The Dispositions it Requires.*

First Point.—The priest should always study; either to acquire additional knowledge, or to preserve that which he has acquired.

I. Study in order to learn. Who is the priest, however educated, who does not feel the necessity of enlarging the circle of his knowledge? Ecclesiastical science is immense. The more one advances in this field, the further its limits appear to recede. *Docete—teach;* such is our mission, the first of our functions. In order to teach religion, we should have a perfect knowledge of it. St. Paul wishes us to be able to exhort in sound doctrine, and to convince those who gainsay. Where shall we find that precision and exactness of expression necessary to expound the dogmas of faith, and the principles of morals, except in continuous study? Apart from the clerical education we received in the seminary, there is another, sacerdotal, pastoral education. We ought, moreover, to be priests of our own day, and when human sciences progress leading minds toward learning, can the clergy neglect that which is almost necessary in order to do good?

II. Study necessary to preserve acquired knowledge. The faculties of our minds wear out as fast as those of the body when we cease to improve them, and we soon forget what we had learned best. Let us cite two weighty authorities: *Praepara opus tuum, monet Spiritus Sanctus, et cum id minime sufficiat, statim subdit: et diligenter exerce agrum tuum. Utinam non contingeret, quod tamem frequentissime videmus, aliquot nempe sacerdotes, qui initio praeclarissime confessarii munus susceperunt, deinde . . . omni studiorum cura neglecta, pristinam moralis theologiae scientiam amittere, ita ut, qui in ejusmodi arte peritissimi fuerant, tandem exigua solum confusaque ipsius artis scientia, primisque rudimentis instructi, vix inter tyrones adnumerentur.* (Ben. xiv, inst. de Sac. Poen.) *Nullus confessarius intermittere debet theologiae moralis studium; quia ex tot diversis quae ad hanc scientiam pertinent, multa quamvis lecta, temporis progressu decedunt e mente.* (St. Lig. pronis confess.) Let us learn from the experience of others. Though we do our best, we shall always have to say, "remember not my ignorances," but we shall be able to say it without uneasiness if we have not neglected anything in order to learn what we were obliged to know, and to preserve knowledge already acquired.

Second Point.—Great advantages to be found in ecclesiastical study. It helps to obtain sacerdotal sanctity, and at the same time protects and defends it.

I. A retired life, recollection, a spirit of sacrifice, a lawful and continual exercise of our intellectual faculties, are in reality the means which hasten our progress toward true sanctity. We find all these if we are faithful to our sacred studies. Separation from the world and from its frivolities is the first duty of a studious priest; his study and his church are the places he loves. He likes to reflect, to remain in solitude with his books. He shapes his conduct on the teachings of reason, and on observation. He has a firmness and constancy which make him walk without deviation or weakness toward the goal he means to reach. When you mention a studious priest, you mention a man of energy, for science is not acquired without effort. What is better calculated to advance us in sacerdotal sanctity?

II. Ecclesiastical study, while sanctifying us, guards us against many storms which would otherwise certainly assail us. Though we be given to study, we shall not escape every kind of temptation; but these will be less dangerous. Study, to the priest, is a powerful weapon to withdraw him from the tyranny of the senses. It chains the imagination, that enemy so dreadful when we allow it to wander astray in its dreams. Temptation can not reach the soul, when the spirit, filled with serious thought, reduces the body to merely passive functions. Study purifies man, spiritualizes him, disengages his soul, in a manner, from its material envelope, and frees him from earthly disturbances. In the matter of divine science, the heart and the mind are, as it were, the two plates of the scale; plunge the mind into study, and the heart rises up to heaven.

Third Point.—Dispositions which study requires. Science has its dangers: "knowledge puffeth up." Not to speak of rash curiosity, of presumption, it is to be feared that familiarity with august mysteries may dislodge the sacred truths from the heart, in proportion as they enter the mind. It might happen that, the more deeply we consider them, the less we relish them: *Utilis lectio*, says St. Bernard, *utilis eruditio, sed multo magis unctio necessaria.* St. Paulinus wrote to one of his friends: *Philosophiam fide condias.* St. Thomas used to say that he had learned more at the foot of the crucifix than in books. In order to acquire the science of God, prayer becomes the indispensable auxiliary of study. "If thou shalt call for wisdom . . . thou shalt find the knowledge of God." (Prov. ii. 3, 5.) Let us study methodically, assiduously, but prayerfully.

The most important point is to often ask ourselves what object we have in view when at study. Let us hear St. Bernard: *Sunt qui scire volunt eo fine tantum ut sciant, et turpis curiositas est; sunt qui scire volunt ut sciantur, et turpis vanitas est; sunt qui scire volunt ut scientiam vendant, et turpis quaestus est; sunt quoque qui scire volunt ut aedificent, et caritas est; et item qui scire volunt ut aedificentur, et prudentia est.* These two last intentions, viz., a desire to sanctify one's self, and a desire to sanctify our fellow-beings, are the only ends that a good priest should propose to himself.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The priest has need of continual study. I. In order to acquire new knowledge. The scope of ecclesiastical study is immense. St. Paul wills us to be able to teach according to sound doctrine, and to convince those who contradict us. Only deep, continued study can enable us to expound with exactness and precision the dogmas of faith and the principles of morals. The clergy should be able to hold the respect of the people, and in our day, unfortunately, more consideration is attached to science than to virtue. It is desirable that the clergy should impart the proper direction to the movement which leads men toward learning. II. In order to preserve already acquired knowledge. It is easy to forget what we once knew. This is the teaching of the doctors and also of experience.

Second Point.—Great advantages of ecclesiastical study. It helps in the acquirement of sacerdotal virtue, and protects it. Through a retired life, holy recollection, the spirit of sacrifice, the lawful exercise of our intellectual faculties. It protects virtue. Study controls the imagination, spiritualizes man, withdraws him from the tyranny of the senses. In the matter of the science of God, when the mind becomes imbued with it, the heart rises up to heaven.

Third Point.—Dispositions which study requires. Learning has its dangers: "knowledge puffeth up." It is liable to foster pride, to weaken or destroy piety. Let us sanctify study, and make it profitable by prayer, as the saints did, and particularly as St. Thomas used to do. Let us have no other object in our studies save a desire to procure our sanctification and that of our neighbor.

March 19.—St. Joseph.

MEDITATION LXXVI.

HIS PRIVILEGES.

1.—*As Husband of Mary.*
2.—*As Foster Father of Jesus.*

Our devotion toward a saint whose name is associated with the sweet names of Jesus and of Mary, demands of us a threefold homage: veneration, because of his greatness; imitation, because of his virtues; confidence, because of his power, and of his desire to give us efficacious assistance: "Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus."

First Point.—Privileges of St. Joseph as husband of Mary. This is his first title to our veneration. All the beauty and glory which shine in the holy Virgin redound upon him whom God Himself had given her as a husband. Was there ever a more suitable alliance? What sort of man must be the blessed mortal chosen among all men by the Lord to share the destiny of His Mother? This distinction alone raised St. Joseph to a dignity almost as glorious for him as was the divine maternity for Mary. Let him then, like Mary, express his gratitude and admiration by saying: "He who is mighty has done great things to me." Joseph was the husband of Mary. Mary, the creature of an order all divine, raised above all others by so many privileges: immaculate conception, virginal parturition, death caused by love, anticipated resurrection, triumphant assumption. Mary, adorned with all the virtues, with all perfections compatible with human nature; Mary, whom all the doctors, all the saints, all tongues, all generations have praised and shall praise forever; Mary, from the hand of God Himself, received a husband worthy of her, and this husband is Joseph. To him, therefore, we may apply the words: "There was not found the like to him in glory." (Ecclus. xliv. 20.)

Blessed Joseph, thou needest not regret the throne of David or the crown of Juda. To be the husband of Mary was worth more than all the thrones of the universe. Tell, if thou canst, the dower which this admirable spouse brought to thee, and the fruits which thou dost derive from this sacred alliance. Tell of the rich treasures which fell to thy lot, through the presence, the conversation, the prayer and ardent charity of Mary during the space of thirty years. On her God had poured the plenitude of His graces, and as she

loved thee more than any spouse ever loved her husband, she desired to share with thee all the advantages that she enjoyed. Fully penetrated with the sentiments of her Son, she desired to kindle everywhere the sacred fire of divine love! How ardent must be the flame which she kindled in the heart of Joseph, a heart prepared to receive all heavenly favors!

O priest, congratulate St. Joseph, admire his vocation; but think also on your own. As husband of Mary, Joseph is the head of the Holy Family. Nothing was done save by his order and direction. To him the angels speak directly when it is a question of going to Egypt or of returning to Judea; to him, as well as to Mary, is revealed the name of the adorable infant. The Lord constituted him the head of His house, the master and lord of Mary, and she faithfully observes toward him the law imposed on all wives. "Let wives be subject to their husbands." (Pet. iii. 1.) He confides to him all that is most dear to Him. "Appoints him the lord of His house, and prince over all His possessions." He makes him His agent, His minister in the direction of a mystery which it is not time yet to manifest to the world. O priests! this is also what you are, in the Church, in that house of God wherein you exercise so many powers, wherein you perform so many sublime functions, where you co-operate with so many designs of mercy!

As husband of Mary, Joseph was her great benefactor; he saved her honor, her life; he acquired innumerable claims to her gratitude through all he did and suffered for her Son and for her. Good priests deserve the consideration and esteem of the Virgin Mary. Were it not for them, O holy Virgin, thy altars would not be decorated, thy festivals would not be celebrated; nay, wouldst thou, without priests, have altars and festivals? Thou owest them more than thy glory, since they procure the glory of thy Son. Is it not owing to their zeal that He is known and adored? O my God, Thou hast then called me to rejoice the heart of Thy mother! I am in a state where I have a thousand ways in which to procure for myself her warmest affection. For this be Thou forever blest! Cease not, I pray, to increase my love for her. When this love shall be perfect, I shall have nothing to desire in heaven, where all will contribute to my happiness; neither will I have anything to desire on earth, for the love of Mary detaches the heart from the world, in which there is nothing which can please, as there is nothing which can harm, her faithful servants.

Second Point.—Privileges of Joseph considered as father of Jesus, "of whom was born Jesus." This title is a consequence of the other. *Si vir Mariae*, says St. Jerome, *et pater Dei est.* Think

ing on this privilege, the mind is astounded in considering the glories of St. Joseph. We see him in a manner associated to the glory of the divine paternity, since he is the father of a Son who is the only Son of God Himself; he is father, not merely as a courteous title, but by the delegation of the eternal Father, who gives him, over the Word Incarnate, the rights of a father over his son; father he is, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, who creates in him a paternal heart, and imparts to it, toward Jesus Christ, all the sentiments, all the emotions, all the devotedness of the heart of a father. He becomes, by grace, that which he is not by nature. Like Mary, he is filled with admiration and joy when he hears of the great things that the Child is to accomplish. "His father and His mother were wondering concerning the things that were said of Him." Like Mary, he is bowed down with sorrow when he thinks that he has lost the dear object of his affection. Think of his anxiety, of his tears when he returns to Jerusalem in search of Jesus! "They return to Jerusalem seeking Him." "Where is He? What has become of the precious treasure which heaven had confided to my care?" How deep their affliction! but how well did Mary know the heart of Joseph, when, after finding Jesus, she exclaimed: "Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee, sorrowing."

Admirable paternity of St. Joseph, as consoling for us as it was glorious for him! Did he become the father of the Son of God without becoming the father of his adopted children? Can the father of Jesus not consider as his children those whom Jesus considers His brothers? We know, O great saint, that thou hast the heart of a father for the Word Incarnate, and thou hast the same sentiments for all those who through Him, and in Him, have become the children of God! We desire to participate in the sentiments of Jesus toward thee, viz., in His filial affection, His respect, His unbounded confidence.

Let us not omit, in our meditation, the inestimable prerogatives enjoyed by St. Joseph as a consequence of this paternity. As father of Jesus, his duty was to provide for Him. He who gives food to all those who are hungry, wished to receive His daily nourishment from a poor mechanic, who had no other resource save the labor of his hands. By the sweat of his brow Joseph earns the means to sustain the life of Jesus; and this life is to be the salvation of the world! The good priest will also be comforted amid the labors and trials of his ministry if he will say to himself: I wear myself out; I shorten, perhaps, the days of my existence; but Jesus will live and reign in the hearts of men; I contribute to the salvation of immortal souls.

Joseph's office, as father of Jesus, was to be His guide. Exteriorly he guided Him who governs the world—commands Him whose behest every creature in heaven and on earth obeys. "He was subject to them." Those three words only did the Saviour's historians leave to us concerning eighteen years of a life which was a series of prodigies.

By this they desired to draw our attention to the great wonder of a God being so perfectly and for so long a time subject to a man. This wonder, however, is continued among us through the ministry of the priest. What happens at the altar? Do we not exercise a more surprising authority over the same God? Joseph commanded the sovereign Lord in the days of His humble, mortal life! We dispose of Him at our will in the days of His glory!

Joseph, as father of Jesus, was bound to protect, to defend, and if necessary, to save Him. He, in fact, saved the life of Jesus when he hid Him from the fury of Herod. Will he be the only one to enjoy that honor? No. The priest shares it also with Joseph. The good priest is the protector and, in a manner, the saviour of Jesus. He protects His honor against the outrages of incredulity and of impiety. He protects His adorable presence in the Eucharist against irreverence and sacrilegious profanation; he protects His life, in the souls of men, against mortal sin which banishes Him from them. If, through my zeal, I prevent a grave infraction of the law of God, I preserve Jesus, as St. Paul says, from another crucifixion. (Heb. vi. 6.)

Finally, as father of Jesus, Joseph receives from Him those tokens of tender affection which contribute so much to the comfort and happiness of parents. In spirit enter reverently the household of the Holy Family. Behold Joseph holding in his arms the infant Jesus, who calls him father, lavishes upon him the most tender caresses and courts him to return them. Who shall ever be able to tell of the delights which then filled the heart of the happy father? But the priest who receives communion every day enjoys fully the same privilege. He possesses the same treasure, possesses it in a more intimate manner. Give me, O my God, the purity, give me the love of this great saint; I will then have no reason to envy his vocation and dignity.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Privileges of St. Joseph as husband of Mary. All the honor and glory of Mary are reflected in her spouse. What sort of a man must he have been who was chosen from among all others by God Himself to participate in the destiny of His Mother,

to be her protector and support? Joseph is the head of the Holy Family; nothing is done there except by this order and under his direction. To him it is that angels speak. God made him His agent in the direction and execution of one of His most magnificent designs. Consider the priest's position.

Second Point.—Privileges of Joseph as father of Jesus. God gives him over the Word Incarnate the rights of a father over his son. As father of Jesus his duty was to nourish Him. Joseph supports Jesus by the sweat of His brow. He commands Him whose behests heaven and earth obey. He is in duty bound to defend Him, to save His life; it was Joseph who hid Him from the fury of Herod, thus becoming the saviour of Him who is the Saviour of all. Finally, as father of Jesus, Joseph receives from Him those tokens of affection which contribute so much to the happiness of parents. It is also my privilege to participate in all the favors which were lavished upon this great saint. O my God, give me his purity, his devotedness, his charity, and I will have no reason to envy his vocation and dignity.

MEDITATION LXXVII.

THREE VIRTUES OF ST. JOSEPH PROPOSED TO PRIESTS FOR THEIR IMITATION.

1.—*His Lively Faith.*
2.—*His Profound Humility.*
3.—*His Firm Hope.*

First Point.—Lively faith of St. Joseph. When God destines a man to some sublime office, He adorns him with the graces suitable to that vocation and enables him to fulfil it worthily. Before Joseph was elevated to the glorious dignity of husband of Mary, and to the duties attached to it, he had been prepared for it by the gift of an admirable faith. The blessedness of Mary consisted in having believed. "Blessed art thou that hast believed." On this account also was Joseph blessed. He believes that, through the power of God, the most fruitful maternity is not incompatible with the most pure virginity, and that in Mary this wonder is destined to be realized. He believes that this destitute Babe, born in a poor stable, is the King of kings, the Creator of the universe, the joy of angels, the terror of devils. He believes that the Son of God, who came among men to save them, wishes to be Him-

self saved by a man, and that he, Joseph, being chosen for this extraordinary ministry, must carry Him into Egypt, across deserts, although, to all appearances, this almost impracticable flight is full of peril. His faith gains additional strength from all that he sees and from all that he hears; even obstacles contribute to its constancy. And then Almighty God almost unveils Himself to His faithful servant. He reveals to him His secrets, makes known to him His designs, allows him to penetrate the depth of the mystery of the Incarnate Word.

Hence came that deep respect which never left him in his most familiar relations with the infant Jesus, nay, in the very exercise of his authority over Him. While commanding, he adores the Son of God. Hence came also that sweet, continuous contemplation, those delights of a future life which he began to taste in this very world.

Holiness and happiness are the fruits of a lively faith. By faith we believe what we do not see, and by a lively faith we, in some measure, see what we believe. Faith, says St. Augustine, is the look of the heart. If this look is penetrating, if it pierces the cloud, if it catches but a glimpse of the divine splendor, love is kindled immediately into a flame; and love in its plenitude and in its elevation is perfection on earth and beatitude in heaven. Ah, how advantageous for priests is this faith, resplendent with light, burning with the flames of holy love! The priesthood, says Pope St. Leo, is a profession made up of faith and humility. It should be composed of heavenly minded men. If faith will not teach us the value of souls, where shall we find that generosity, that devotion, that zeal, that patience and tender compassion necessary to save souls? How shall we stand at the altar with that profound feeling, with that holy awe which the presence of Jesus should inspire, if we perceive not, as it were, the rays of His glory through the appearances which hide Him from the eyes of our body?

Second Point.—St. Joseph's humility. Great were the humiliations he had to suffer amid the favors lavished upon him. He was the descendant of a family which was to give humanity a Redeemer, which counted twenty-three kings among its ancestors, and he is reduced to indigence, so that in order to live he has to work at a common trade, in the very places in which his forefathers had swayed the scepter. Joseph is at the beck and call of ordinary men; he has to bear with their caprices, their ignorance, their pride; to thank them when they employ him, and pay him for his hard work. Such was the condition imposed upon him by Providence. Far from complaining, he returns thanks to God, and accepts the humiliations of this state of life. Of his family

he never speaks. He is willing to pass for a man of the lowest class. He seeks no other glory, has no other ambition than to be hid from the world in order to be the more faithful to his God. But the favors which he received of Him were perhaps a greater trial for his humility than actual humiliations.

Joseph was the guardian of a mighty secret. Had he chosen to make known the mystery of the God Incarnate confided to his care, he would undoubtedly have acquired much personal honor, and at the same time procured much glory to Jesus Christ. Why does he not reveal it, at least to some trusted friends? This Messias, so ardently desired, had come down on earth for the sake of men, and, according to God's designs, was to be known by them sooner or later; could He be made known too soon? There were many motives to induce Joseph to speak. How many pretexts would self-love have suggested to us in an occasion so delicate? Joseph is silent. His mission was not to make the Messias known, but rather to cover Him with the veil of his own obscurity, until the destined day of His manifestation.

O Joseph, I revere in you the obscurity wherein the divine majesty conceals itself. Your glory appears only to the eyes of God and of His angels; men are not capable of appreciating it. Obtain for me the grace to fully comprehend a maxim which you practised so well, and which I never read without terror to my pride: *Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari.* Obtain for me this humility, which is the most beautiful ornament of the priesthood, the principle of all graces, the source of all good: *Humilitas sacerdotum gemma.* (St. Laur. Just.) *Nulla splendidior gemma . . . humilitate.* (St. Bern.) *Sancta humilitas exhibet praesulem possessorem sui, acceptum Deo, hominibus charum, dignum caelo, angelorum socium, praeditum sanctitate receptaculum Paracleti, contemptorem mundi, diaboli victorem.* (St. Laur. Just.)

Third Point.—Hope of St. Joseph. His annoyances and trials only contribute to make his confidence in God stronger and unchangeable. Of him it may be said as of Abraham, that "he hoped against all hope." His lively faith had lifted him so high above the things of earth that the lowliness of his condition was the least of his trials, it being painful to him only as it occasioned privations and sufferings to Jesus and to Mary. How grieved he was at Bethlehem, seeing he could offer no dwelling but a stable to her whom the Messias had chosen for His Mother, and who was about to give Him to the world! Yet not even then did his confidence in God fail him; and never was it more clearly justified. This night, so sadly begun, shall fill with ineffable delights the hearts of Mary and Joseph.

When the angel commanded him to go into Egypt, he did not stop to ask who would be his guide, who would supply the money for the journey, who would provide for the Child and His Mother in a country where they would be without means of subsistence. He does not even inquire about the duration of his exile. It suffices to know that God orders it.

The most painful of his trials was his cruel perplexity concerning his holy spouse, while he was ignorant of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God in her sacred womb. He has recourse to prayer; he turns to God, who does not forsake him. Blessed was that moment when the angel of the Lord came to tell him: "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take to thee Mary for thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."

O blessed hope, virtue of great souls, thou art, in a special manner, the virtue of apostolic men. *Magna audent*, says St. Bernard, *qui magni sunt.* When, by the order of heaven, we are engaged in a work, it is not perils and oppositions we have to fear but our own pusillanimity. "I can do all in Him who comforts me;" behold the maxim of the priest who lives by faith. He first discovers the will of God, and then rises above all terrors, above all so-called impossibilities. He even takes a secret pleasure in seeing himself destitute of all human support, because he then throws himself with greater confidence into the arms of Providence. Remember St. Francis Xavier, St. Vincent de Paul, and so many others. There is nothing that so honors God as the power of those who confide in Him: *Nihil omnipotentiam Dei clariorem reddit, quam quod omnipotentes facit omnes qui in se sperant.* (St. Bern.) Why did I deny myself for so long the merit and sweetness of a virtue which fills the soul with such calmness, strength, and consolation? *Qui omnem sollicitudinem suam in Deum jactat, habet ipsum Dominum in provisorem.* (St. Bon.) *Cujus est fortitudo Dominus, tam non cadit quam non cadit Dominus.* (St. Aug.) *O spes, tu omnia portare facis dulciter et suaviter.* (Id.) St. Laurence Justinian says of hope: *Ipsa est in labore requies, in aestu temperies, in fletu solatium.* (Tract. de spe. ch. 2.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Lively faith of St. Joseph. Mary was blessed because she had believed. So it was with St. Joseph. His faith remains unshaken, notwithstanding apparent impossibilities. Almighty God rewards his faith by giving him a great insight into the divine mysteries. Hence came that profound spirit of religion which moved him to adore the infant Jesus while commanding Him. Hence also came for him a sweet, continuous contemplation.

Second Point.—Humility of St. Joseph. It had to triumph over humiliations and over heavenly favors. He was a descendant of a family of kings, and instead of wielding the scepter as many of his ancestors had done, he had to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. This obscurity he accepted with readiness. His humility appeared still stronger amid the great favors which heaven lavished upon him.

Third Point.—Hope of St. Joseph. Contradictions strengthen his hope, far from shaking it. At Bethlehem, where he finds no lodging-place; when starting to, or returning from Egypt, he hopes against hope. Think of his joy, procured for him by his confidence in God on the day that the angel came to tell him: "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take to thee Mary for thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."

March 21.—St. Benedict.

MEDITATION LXXVIII.

GOD'S WONDERFUL GIFTS TO THE SAINT.

Although the festival of this day is particularly dear to Religious, since St. Benedict had received the special mission of drawing up rules for their guidance, it has an equal interest for the priests whose office it is to direct the souls of Religious, and all those that are called to perfection. This saint was born about the year 480, in the duchy of Spoleto, of wealthy and noble parents. Sent to Rome when he was seven years old, he made rapid progress in the human sciences, and still more rapid strides in the science of salvation. When he had reached his fifteenth year, he sought a shelter in the desert. Among steep rocks, surrounded with chasms, he perceived a grotto shaped like a grave; here he abode during three years, none having knowledge of his secret abode save a charitable man, who brought him some bread every week. He was, however, discovered by monks of the neighborhood. These, by dint of entreaties, induced him to come and govern them; but he had hardly endeavored to make them walk strictly in the narrow path of their profession, when they refused to obey him, and resolved to take his life. They presented to him in the refectory a glass which contained poison; but as soon as, according

to his custom, he blessed it with the sign of the cross, it broke into pieces.

He returned to his solitude, and was followed thither by so great a number of disciples that he built in his desert as many as twelve monasteries. Later on he founded that of Monte Cassino, which became the chief house of his Order. Here it was that he wrote his Rule, which is a perfect code of religious sanctification. Here also he died, on the 21st day of March in the year 543. At the moment of his death, two of his Religious, living far apart, in two different monasteries, saw a luminous track rising from the cell of the saint up to heaven, and at the same time heard a voice which said: "Along this road did Benedict, the beloved of God, go up to heaven." We know of no other saint in whom was more visibly realized the hundred-fold promised by the Saviour to those who have left all things to follow Him. Through the grace of God he found

1.—*Life in Death.*
2.—*Riches in Poverty.*
3.—*Glory in the Most Profound Obscurity.*

First Point.—Through the wonderful grace of God, Benedict finds life in death. If he had left the world simply to escape the dangers which it offers to virtue, and to labor more surely for his perfection, he could have selected a less frightful desert, used less rigorous mortifications; but here is a youth of fifteen, surrounded with all the attention that could possibly be bestowed upon childhood, who without consulting any one but God, goes and shuts himself up in a cavern where he will have no company but that of wild animals, no other bed than the hard rock, no garment but a coarse haircloth, nor hardly any other food but wild roots. Should we not infer from those providential preparations that God is about to raise in His Church a wonder of sanctity, and to give him a most extraordinary supernatural life, instead of the corporal life which he sacrifices for love of Him?

But what came to pass? The excessive austerities which, under ordinary conditions, would have destroyed his strength in a few days, not only preserved and increased it, but men might have said of this tomb in which he had buried himself alive that which was said of the grave of the Lord: "The house of death becomes to him the house of life; the hollow of the rock is the womb of a miraculous mother, who conceives a dead man, and brings forth one living." (St. Pet. Chrys.) The courageous youth dies to everything and to himself to live for God alone; and God

returns with interest all that he has sacrificed for Him. Besides health, He grants him knowledge, a knowledge more precious than all the learning he could have obtained in the academies of the world. He sets him up as the master of a nation of saints and of learned men. Who can think of the children of St. Benedict, and of their works, without admiring how much vigor there was in the root which brought forth such branches and produced such marvelous fruits!

Why are we so tepid? Because we are filled with the foolish idea that we must give too much to God. We are afraid to be the losers in an exchange which is all profit for us. Understand, O my soul, that death leadeth to life; that the more thou disengagest thyself from human interests, the more thou deservest to be the recipient of heavenly benedictions.

Second Point. — St. Benedict finds riches in poverty. He could, with reason, have promised to himself all that men seek in the enjoyment of wealth, the culture of the mind, and the exercise of power. These he renounced for love of Jesus Christ. But to reward him, Our Saviour treated him as He did the apostles, and seemed to say to him as He said to them: "Come, My well-beloved poor Benedict, thou hast nothing and thou art, therefore, the better prepared to be enriched by My munificence. The more abundant the spring, the more empty should be the vessel which is taken to it to be filled."

He had despised his paternal inheritance, and wished, in imitation of the Saviour, to have nowhere to lay his head—therefore the rich of the world will open their treasures to him. As the apostles, when receiving of the early Christians the price of their fields, used it all for the relief of their brethern, so Benedict gives with one hand what he receives with the other, and remains as poor as if he had received nothing. Let us see how God lavished spiritual blessings upon him.

St. Gregory said of St. Benedict that he was filled with the spirit of all the just; that is, that the Lord united in his person the many gifts which He divides among the other saints. It is wonderful indeed that he came out of his cavern adorned with a wealth of divine grace, by a sort of new creation. Without having studied, he had knowledge; without having learned theology, he was a doctor; no other law had he read save the Gospel, and he was a legislator; he had had no one to direct him, and was, nevertheless, an admirable guide. Grace gave him the spirit of government as it did to Moses; the spirit of prophecy, as to Elias and Eliseus; and the spirit of zeal, as to the apostles.

To become a more perfect servant of God, Benedict had re-

jected the power and dignities of his high birth; and behold, almighty God has invested him with an almost absolute authority over all creatures. To his voice the animals, the elements, nay the very demons are obedient; the dead return to life at his command; he performs miracles and communicates the power of performing them to others. Ah, how good is the Master whom we serve! Let us place all our hopes in Him, and, in order that grace may have full liberty of action in us, let us adhere to nothing earthly, and divest ourselves of "the old man."

Third Point.—Miracle of grace in St. Benedict, who finds incomparable glory in the most profound obscurity. Full of contempt for himself, he thought he had so arranged matters that it was impossible for him to undertake anything remarkable in the order of human affairs; but God chooses him to accomplish great and magnificent designs. The more he hides himself, the more Providence makes him known, and for all ages to come he shall be an object of veneration. He retires from the world, and the most distinguished persons of the world call on him in his desert, and princes and bishops consult him as an oracle. Respected by the great, beloved by the humble, he is feared by the very men who spread terror in every place—recollect the celebrated Totila at the feet of this humble monk! Nothing, however, made Benedict so glorious as the founding of that Order which spread so rapidly in all parts of Europe, and has been so useful to the Church through its writers, apostles, its martyrs, its long line of sovereign pontiffs and of holy bishops.[1]

Let us honor this illustrious master of the monastic and religious life. While we invoke him, let us also ask the prayers of that countless multitude of saints who, after him, reached the kingdom of glory by following the way which he had traced out for them. Let us, after his example, and that of his disciples who are already crowned, build up the edifice of our sanctification upon prayer, labor, mortification of the senses, and silence.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Through a miracle of God's grace Benedict finds life in death. The courageous youth executes the project of dying to everything and to himself, in order to live for God alone, and in exchange for the corporal life which he sacrifices, God gives him a supernatural life. Understand it, O thou my soul, that God will not be surpassed in generosity; that death leads to life, and that the

[1] In 1780, according to Godescard, the Order of St. Benedict numbered 37,000 houses. Giving ten monks for each of them, it made up nearly 400,000 persons living under his Rule.

more thou wilt divest thyself of things human, the better shalt thou be clothed with things divine.

Second Point.—By a miracle of grace Benedict finds riches in poverty. Because he has rejected his inheritance, and willed, like the Saviour, to have no place whereon to lay his head, the rich shall open their treasures for him. What of the spiritual blessings lavished upon him? He is filled with the spirit of all the just. Ah, how good is God whom we serve! Let us cast all our cares in His bosom.

Third Point.—Benedict finds glory in the midst of most profound obscurity. The more he hides himself, the more does Providence make him known. He withdraws from the world, and the most distinguished persons in the world call on him in the desert. Nothing, however, was so glorious for this saint as the founding of his Order.

March 25.—The Annunciation.

MEDITATION LXXIX.

GABRIEL APPEARS TO MARY.

1.—*The Embassy which Heaven Sends to Mary.*
2.—*How does the most Holy Virgin receive it.*
3.—*The Elevation of Soul which She Displays in this Mystery.*

First Prelude.—Let us go in spirit to the dwelling of the most holy Virgin at Nazareth. Let us consider the poverty of her apartment. This is the temple wherein the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation will be wrought. Mary is at prayer.

Second Prelude.—For us, priests, who have such a large share in the glories of Mary, let us ask, through her intercession, to participate in her holy dispositions.

First Point.—Heaven sends an embassy to Mary. Solemnity, object, of this embassy. The heavenly messenger is Gabriel, "the strength of God." He comes from, and in the name of God. "Sent from God." All heaven is intent upon the great event about to be accomplished; but it is an event of far greater interest for earth. There is question of lifting up mankind, fallen through Adam, of reconciling God with men. The Holy Trinity does not say to-day, as of old: "Let us make man to our likeness." It says: "Let us make God to the likeness of man, let us make the God-man, let

the immense ruin of guilty humanity be repaired by Him. Justice shone forth in the punishment of the rebellious angels; let mercy have its glorious manifestation in the salvation of men!" O wonder of love! O unexpected blessing! Will it ever be necessary to recall it to the remembrance of mortals? The person of the Word is about to deliver us from hell, to lift up our nature to the very throne of the divinity! Whither does the prince of heaven go? To whom, do you think, will he offer the most signal honor which God Himself can offer a creature? There were in those days, as there are in our own, women of high and honorable estate, of noble blood, fabulously wealthy. The Creator of the universe seeks a spouse, a mother. Yet He does not seek her in palaces, nor among the grandeurs which dazzle the eye. Behold the realization of the word of the prophet when he represented God sitting upon the cherubim, and at the same time beholding the depths. (Dan. iii. 55.) The most Holy Trinity, in order to choose a dwelling for a humble and annihilated God, regards with approval an abyss of humility and self-abasement.

O priests, in proportion only to your voluntary abasements will you be found worthy to concur in the work of God's mercy. "The Lord is high above all nations. . . . He looketh down on the low things in heaven and in earth." (Ps. cxii.)

An archangel, then, is sent to a virgin, who, in the opinion of men, was simply the wife of a poor workman, and who in her own estimation was less still, in fact, nothing. In her it is, and in her favor, that the Almighty will work the most wonderful of miracles. He does not send her Gabriel as the bearer of His behests; he is sent to ask her consent. He comes to negotiate with Mary concerning a matter which might well have been the object of an absolute decree. How will she bear the weight of those unforeseen and incomprehensible glories which Gabriel will announce to her?

Second Point.—Mary receives the heavenly messenger and the honor of divine maternity. Let us consider the words of the angel, and the answers of Mary. In his words we shall admire the most admirable graces which heaven can offer; in hers the greatest sanctity which ever appeared on earth.

"The angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women!" What magnificent praise! Mary should believe it, for it was from God she received this praise, from the lips of His ambassador. Blind as we are, full of miseries, perhaps separated from God by sin, and deserving of condemnation, we readily believe every word which flatters us, regardless of its source. Yet Mary is troubled because heaven bestows upon her praises which she deserves. "Who,

having heard, was troubled at his saying." And I feel troubled and grieved if men neglect to give me praise which I do not in the least deserve! Her trouble was an indication of her humility; my trouble indicates my pride. "She thought within herself what manner of salutation this might be." A prudence truly admirable, but as for me, I at once give way to joy and satisfaction, if, in my vanity, I hear an expression of esteem addressed to me. How foolish, nay, often how dangerous!

The angel hastens to assure the humble virgin. "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God." Is there any reason to fear when one has found grace with God? What subject of fear was there for this creature, beloved of God among all creatures, who now learns that she is predestined to be the Mother of the Most High; that her Son shall reign, not only over the house of Jacob, but over the whole universe, and that His kingdom shall have no end? Mary, however, is not yet free from all alarm. She is a virgin, and has willed to remain a virgin. How shall the glories announced to her be reconciled with her sacred vow? "How shall this be done, for I know not man?" In this question there is neither doubt nor diffidence. What the holy messenger will say, she believes in advance, "because no word shall be impossible with God." Mary's question is a sudden expression of her extreme love for purity. O holy Virgin, how pleasing to God was this disposition of thy heart, how conformable to His designs! This was really the disposition which deserved for thee the most glorious of all elections. Gabriel explains to her the ineffable wonder. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the virtue of the Most High shall overshadow thee." Mary then gives her consent in a few words which reveal all her virtues, her faith, her humility, her obedience, her love of God; her ardent desire to concur in the salvation of men, but principally her incomparable magnanimity. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word."

Third Point.—Mary's magnanimity in the mystery of the Annunciation. This virtue of Mary appeared both in her readiness to refuse the honor of divine maternity, and in its acceptance.

According to Saints Ambrose, Augustine, Bernard, and many others, so great was Mary's love for holy purity that she would have preferred to remain what she was, if she could not have been, at the same time, virgin and mother. *Angelus partum nuntiat; at illa virginitati inhaeret; et integritatem angelicae demonstrationi anteponendam judicat.* (St. Greg. Nyss.) She thought rightly that the grace which sanctifies us, and renders us agreeable to God, is to be preferred to any favor which merely raises us in the esteem

of men. This determination, however, supposed a great elevation of mind, for she, being more enlightened than the angels, could properly appreciate the value of what she was willing to sacrifice. O Queen of purity, others will come after thee, and walk under the standard which thou hast raised! Their courage is indeed to be praised, but who shall give due praise to thine! They will consent to remain virgins, in order to be the spouses of the Son of God; but thou, in order to remain a virgin, wouldst refuse the honor of becoming His Mother! How great the magnanimity required to renounce divine maternity! And in order to accept this honor, an equal elevation of mind was necessary.

Mary was not deceived as to the consequences of her acquiescence to the word of the angel. She knew that by giving her consent she would sacrifice her rest, her life, nay, something infinitely greater, that is, the very Son of God whose Mother she was about to become. All the life of this so justly beloved Son she had read of in the prophets; His future immolation was known to her. To accept the overwhelming burden of afflictions which she foresaw, she had need of heroic courage. O Virgin, thou shalt be the Mother of the most amiable of all children; but His very loveliness shall be the cause of thy sorrow. What happiness shalt thou find in His presence? It will continually remind thee of His cross, of the cruel torments of His Passion. What a shudder should this thought bring upon thee! When I, therefore, hear thee saying: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word," I imagine that I hear Jesus in the Garden of Olives accepting the bitter chalice, sacrificing Himself for the love of His Father and of us. Accepting the most incomprehensible of all honors, was, on thy part, offering to God the most generous of all sacrifices.

O Mary, where are my virtues when compared with thine, though my dignity is so much like thine own? I admire thy purity, thy magnanimity, thy sanctity; and yet I wonder with the Church how the Son of God condescended to take flesh in thy virginal womb. O my Mother, grant to thy child a little of that profound humility which thou dost acknowledge to have been the cause of thy blessedness. "He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid.... All generations shall call me blessed." Yes! I will lower, annihilate myself more and more, in order to draw down upon me the regards and benedictions of the Lord. "Who dwelleth on high, and looketh down upon the low things in heaven and in earth."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Heaven sends a messenger to Mary. What is the object of it? To repair the great ruin of guilty humanity. To whom shall be offered the greatest honor which God Himself can offer? O my soul, if thou wilt attract the eye of God, and His benedictions to thee, humble thyself.

Second Point.—Mary receives the heavenly message. Let us consider the words of the angel, and the answers of the august Virgin. "Hail, full of grace," etc. What truly magnificent praise! God it was who addressed it to Mary through the mouth of an angel. She is troubled; she thinks within herself. What humility, what prudence! Gabriel imparts confidence. Why should she fear, having found grace with God! He explains how the mystery shall be accomplished, and then Mary gives her consent. "Be it done to me according to thy word."

Third Point.—Mary's magnanimity in the mystery of the Annunciation. This virtue appears in her readiness to refuse and also in her willingness to accept the proffered honor. She would have refused divine maternity rather than to lose her virginity. In order to be spouses of the Word Incarnate others will consent to remain virgins; and Mary, in order to remain a virgin, was ready to renounce the blessedness of becoming His Mother! By accepting the honor of being the Mother of God, Mary showed an equal elevation of soul. This God Incarnate shall have to atone for the sins of the world. Oh, many are the sufferings which Mary foresees both for the Son and for His Mother! To accept the most sublime dignity was to make the most generous sacrifice.

MEDITATION LXXX.

THE AVE MARIA.

The Angelical Salutation contains two distinct parts: The first is a hymn of praise made up of the very words which the Holy Ghost placed on the lips of Gabriel and of St. Elizabeth, in honor of the Blessed Virgin; the second is a short invocation added by the Church. The two parts, taken together, contain an abridgment of our duties toward Mary, which consist in honoring her as our Queen, and invoking her as our Mediatrix and Mother. Faith, however, should vivify this salutation, and while reciting it we should enter into the sentiments of the Holy Ghost and of the Church.

1.—*By the Words of Gabriel and of Elizabeth, the Holy Ghost Teaches Us how to Honor Mary.*

2.—*By the Prayer the Church Added to them, She Teaches Us to Invoke Her.*

First Point.—Let us learn of the Holy Ghost how to praise and honor Mary. When we meditate on the words of the angel and of St. Elizabeth, we discover therein an inexhaustible source of light and piety.

I. *Ave Maria.* Let us remember first to whom these homages are addressed. What is the name of this venerated creature, whom we greet with the archangel Gabriel? Next to the name of Jesus is there on earth another name so sweet? How great thou art, O Mary, how merciful, how worthy of praise! *O magna, O pia, O multum laudabilis, Maria! Tu nec nominari potes,quin accendas, nec cogitari quin recrees affectus diligentium te.*

II. *Gratia plena.* Mary is full of grace and of beauty. Solomon had seen her coming forth as the "morning rising, beautiful as the moon, radiant as the sun." Her exterior graces are merely a reflection of the beauty of her soul. "All the beauty of the king's daughter is within." She is filled with heavenly gifts. "Full of grace." To us grace is measured out, but it entered like a river into the Lord's tabernacle in order to sanctify it, and to make it the channel of all graces. Mary is full of grace, through the privilege of her Immaculate Conception, and of her perfect co-operation with all those graces which she ceased not to receive from that first moment. She has, says St. Thomas, graces for herself, for us all also, and for all our miseries.

III. *Dominus tecum.* The Lord is with Mary. He assists and protects her, and communicates Himself to her spirit and to her heart with a plenitude proportioned to her merits and sublime dignity. He was with her in a manner quite ineffable, even before the Incarnation; but what shall we say of His presence in her, when, during nine months, He dwelt in her pure bosom? O my God, am I less privileged than Thy Mother when I come down from the altar? Where art Thou, O Lord, at that precious moment? Does not my guardian angel say *Dominus tecum* to me also? Alas, how quickly I forget it! Blessed Mother, do thou assist me, pray for me and with me, when, being about to contract with Jesus a union so intimate, I address to Him this request: *Et a te nunquam separari permittas.* Oh, may He be with me, with my mind to enlighten it, with my heart to inflame it with love; may He be with me always, in my labors, in my intentions, in my trials, that I may be always with thee, and with Him in His kingdom.

IV. *Benedicta tu in mulieribus.* Who will not bless Mary, either in heaven or on earth? Who will not bless her, not merely above all women, but above all saints, above all angels, above all creatures? Was there another worthy to be chosen the Mother of God? Was there another whose virginal child-bearing freed the children of all mothers from the malediction brought down by the first mother? Be thou blessed, therefore, O holy Virgin, for that abundance of privileges and spiritual blessings which we admire in thee; be thou blessed for that multitude of blessings thou pourest down upon us; be thou blessed for the infinite dignity to which thou hast been raised by the Son of God, incarnate in thy womb; be thou blessed for the immense glory wherewith thou art crowned in heaven! O pastor of souls, put those praises of Mary on the pure lips of your children; teach them to bless and to love her; you can do nothing more pleasing to heaven, nothing of greater advantage to your people and to yourself.

V. *Et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesus.* Those words of St. Elizabeth are a congratulation addressed to the Blessed Virgin, and a hymn in honor of Jesus Christ. Mary is nothing save through and in Jesus. Her divine maternity is the focus whence emanate the rays of glory which encircle her. The Son is, therefore, the end of all the honors bestowed upon the Mother, as He is also the principle of them. To Him alone relates all the worship offered to the saints and to the Queen of the saints: *Beatae Virginis honor et gloria laus et gratiarum actio est Redemptoris.* (St. Ild. Tol.) *Totus honor impensus matri sine dubio redundat in gloriam filii.* (Rupert.) Mary accepts our praises solely in order to return them to Jesus. If the priesthood is so dear to her heart, it is because Jesus, the fruit of her womb, is blessed at all times and in every place through our ministry.

Second Point.—Let us learn of the Church how we should invoke Mary.

I. *Sancta Maria, mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus.*[1] Mary, Mother of God. First motive of our confidence. She has upon Jesus all the claims that a mother has upon her son. What could He refuse her? From Him she has received a real omnipotence, not of command but of intercession: *Omnipotentia supplex.* Her credit has, therefore, no limits. But will she be willing to use it in our behalf? We simply answer, she is our Mother. O Mary, the most tender of mothers, pray for children who have cost thee so many sorrows! We have still another title wherewith to secure

[1] It is believed that this second part of the Angelical Salutation dates from the Council of Ephesus, and that it was composed by St. Cyrille of Alexandria.

thy compassion: O Blessed Mother, for we are sinners. Our misery is a claim upon thy mercy. Is there any misery greater than sin? If thou art the Queen of mercy, it must be that the most miserable of sinners is the first of thy subjects: *Tu regina misericordiae, et ego miserrimus peccator subditorum maximus.* (St. Ber. in Salve.)

II. *Nunc, et in hora mortis nostrae.* This "now," for which we implore the mercy and powerful intercession of Mary, is the present moment of our life. The past is ours no longer, and it has left sins to be atoned for; the future does not belong to us; the present is all that we can use, and it is escaping us rapidly. Oh, how frail the duration of human existence on earth! But this moment, *nunc,* is the time of trials and battle. Many are the dangers which surround us; many the enemies bent upon our destruction! O Mary, who will save us if thou forsakest us? *Sicut pulli, volantibus desuper milvis, ad gallinae alas occurrunt, ita nos sub velamento alarum tuarum abscondimur. Nescimus aliud refugium nisi te: tu sola es unica spes nostra: tu sola unica patrona nostra, ad quam omnes aspicimus.* (St. Th. a Villanov.)

Do then, O holy Virgin, pray for us *now,* for on this day, on this hour, on this moment, may depend our eternity! There is, however, an hour more critical still: the last hour which will decide our fate, the hour of darkness and anguish for even the holiest souls, the hour in which we may repair everything and lose everything. Then, especially, when our enemies will attack us more fiercely, we shall have need of a more powerful help. O Mary, at the hour of our death, *in hora mortis nostrae,* be nigh unto us, defend us, pray for us. Blessed is he who expires within thy maternal arms, with his eyes turned toward thy image, thy blessed name on his lips. He quietly falls asleep on earth to wake up in heaven. *Maria, mater gratiae, mater misericordiae, tu nos ab hoste protege, et mortis hora suscipe.*[1]

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Let us learn of the Holy Ghost how we should honor Mary. *Ave Maria.* Is there, next to the name of Jesus, a name as sweet as the name of Mary, the name of this wonderful creature whom we greet with the heavenly Prince! *Gratia plena.* To us grace is measured out; it entered abundantly, even like a river, into the heart of Mary, the tabernacle of the Most High. *Dominus tecum.* The Lord is with her, with a perfection propor-

[1] Morientibus beata Virgo, non tantum succurrit, sed etiam occurrit. (St. Hier., ep. ii: ad Eustach.) Beata Virgo animas morientium suscipit. (St. Vin. Ferr.)

tionate to her merits. *Benedicta tu.* Who would refuse to bless Mary, both for the privileges she has received and for the mercies she pours down upon us? *Et benedictus*, etc. The Son is the recipient of all the honors which we render the Mother.

Second Point.— Let us learn of the Church how we should invoke Mary. *Sancta Maria*, etc. Mary, Mother of God, first motive of our confidence; there are no bounds to her credit, and she will use it in our behalf, for she is also our Mother. Moreover, we are sinners. If she be the Queen of mercy, it follows that the more miserable sinners are the first of her subjects. *Nunc et in hora*, etc. This " now " is the present life, the time of trials and of battle. But how much more necessary still will her intercession be at the hour of our death, an hour on which our eternity depends?

Month of May.

MEDITATION LXXXI.

A MONTH FULL OF HOPE.

1.—*For the Good Pastor the Month of May is Full of Hope.*
2.—*What should He Do to Realize It.*

First Point.—The month of May is, for the good pastor, a month full of hope. Easter time is over; the month of May, with its sweet exercises, will continue the religious feeling in the parish. For sinners who have not yet complied with their most important duty, it will be an occasion of conversion. Devotion toward the most amiable Mother acts powerfully on the most indifferent. Many who failed to hearken to the word of God, or, perhaps, refused contemptuously to hear it, are seen every year drawn, as by a secret force, toward the altar of Mary, yielding to the grace which accompanies the singing of sweet melodies, the simple ceremonies and exhortations of the month of Mary. No one can love the Blessed Virgin and remain an enemy of her divine Son. Who can but love her in witnessing the joy which her blessings inspire when everything speaks of her mercy toward those the least worthy of it? Will the sinners for whom she prays remain impenitent, or will she refuse to pray when solicited to do so by the souls most dear to her, whose only ambition is to procure for her a greater number of devout clients?

St. Epiphanius says that the Incarnate Word is the spiritual brook in which the elect are caught, and that Mary is the bait

which serves to catch them. *Ave, esca spiritalis hami; in te siquidem hamus divinitas.* (De. laud. Deip.) Never do the fishers of men cast the net of the word of God with greater efficacy than when they exhort their people to invoke the Mother of the Redeemer. When does the good priest preach more impressively than when he recounts the mercies of Mary? Mary has taken us from the world, prepared us for the priesthood, offered us to the Lord on the day of our ordination; would we be good priests, if, next to God, she were not the first and sweetest object of our love? During the month of May many festivals occur which will help you in your work. It may be that during this month you have the first communion of your children. Great will be your credit with the Queen of angels when you will present to her the souls of these children, purified in the blood of Jesus, radiant with the splendors of His grace. Enter with confidence into a career where everything promises consolation to your apostolic labors.

Second Point.—How does the good priest realize his hopes during this month? He invites his parishioners to come to Mary's shrine; he speaks to them of Mary, he renews with them his consecration to Mary.

I. Evening reunions around Mary's altar, adorned and beautified, is the principal point; if you can, make them numerous and edifying. Use every means to attain this end. The industrious, intelligent priest studies the tastes of his people. The great thing is to have them attend during the month of May well pleased when they hear the bell calling for their presence.

II. Simple melodies prepare the soul to receive wholesome impressions, but the exhortation is the essential exercise.[1] Let this exhortation be short and in keeping with the character of your hearers; prepare it more by prayer than by study; and let it speak the language of the heart; you may then expect that it will yield much precious fruit, provided you apply yourself constantly to give prominence to the power and goodness of Mary; and even more to her goodness than to her power. As soon as the sinner cares to hear of the miracles of grace obtained through her mercy, you may say that his conversion is begun; it is far advanced when he has begun to implore her intercession and to venerate her. In regard to this we can not too often meditate upon the teaching of the Doctors and the practices of the saints.

St. John Chrysostom says that the Mother of God had been predestined for her incomparable dignity in order to save, by her

[1] Many good priests are satisfied with one or two exhortations in the week and on other evenings read out of a book. It is very desirable that the priest speak as often as possible.

tender compassion, those whom the justice of her Son could not save. Let us hear St. Bernard: *Peccatorem quantumcumque foetidum non horres, non despicis, si ad te suspiraverit, tuumque interventum poenitenti corde flagitaverit. Tu illum desperationis barathro pia manu retrahis, spei medicamen aspiras, ac toti mundo despectum materno affectu amplecteris, foves nec deseris quousque judici miserum reconcilies.* (Apud. S. Bonav. Specul. B. M. V.)

Father Segneri never gave a mission without preaching on the mercy of Mary. This was the subject he loved best. St. Liguori adopted the same practice. After quoting the words of the Blessed Virgin to St. Bridget, "as the lodestone attracts iron, so do I attract the most hardened souls," the holy bishop adds: "This is a miracle of grace which is renewed every day in our missions. Hardened sinners, whom no other sermon could touch, are moved to sorrow and confidence, and return to God when they hear us proclaim the mercies of Mary." The reason of this is given by another saint: *Laudamus humilitatem, miramur virginitatem; sed misericordia miseris sapit dulcius; misericordiam amplectimur carius, recordamur saepius, crebrius invocamus.* (St. Bern. Sen.) Mercy indeed supposes neither merits nor rights in him who is the object of it; it only supposes miseries, and the greater they are, the more they excite compassion.

III. The last day of May has come; the Queen of heaven sees her children engaged in crowning by a still more solemn demonstration the daily homages offered her. In the closing exercises, the good priest employs all his resources. In the morning there is a large number of devout communicants at the holy table; the reunion in the evening will surpass all the others in interest, it shall be, as it were, the farewell of children to their mother. The good pastor will address his hearers with unusual fervor; will consecrate them and himself anew to the holy Virgin, and confide to her maternal care a flock which has become still dearer. This ceremony well performed will produce lasting impressions; will preserve and multiply the spiritual favors received during the month of May.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— For the good priest, the month of May is a month full of hope. I. The time is favorable. II. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin has powerful attractions even for great sinners. Mary is called *esca spiritalis hami.* The good priest never preaches with greater impressiveness than when he preaches on the mercies of Mary.

Second Point.— What does the good priest do to turn the month of May to advantage? I. He uses every means to obtain numer-

ous reunions. He neglects nothing, neither singing nor decorations in order to make them interesting. II. The essential part of the devotion is the exhortation. Let it be short, and adapted to the character of the congregation; let it be in the language of the heart. Bring out in relief the goodness and power of the Blessed Virgin, and praise particularly her compassion. *Laudamus humilitatem, miramur virginitatem; sed misericordia miseris sapit dulcius.* III. The good pastor, for the closing of the exercises, displays all the resources of his zeal; fervent general communion; solemn consecration of the shepherd and of his flock to the great Shepherdess.

May 3.—Discovery of the Holy Cross.

MEDITATION LXXXII.

THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS CONSIDERED WITH REGARD TO OUR SANCTIFICATION.

1.—*By Meditating on It We Secure the Friendship of God.*
2.—*Meditating on the Passion Secures to God the Affections of Our Hearts.*

First Point.—Meditation on the sufferings of Jesus Christ secures for us the friendship of God, for this practice is most pleasing to Him. This mystery is the great object of the thoughts of God. The Old Testament is full of it. Nothing was so minutely predicted in it as the Passion of the Messias. Isaias, Jeremias, and David do more than announce it—they relate it as do the evangelists. Isaac, Joseph, the brazen serpent, the paschal lamb, were touching figures of Jesus Christ sacrificed by His Father, carrying the wood on which He is to be immolated, sold by one of those whom He called His brethren, raised upon the cross and healing the wounds caused by sin; in all this we find an image of the Lamb of God, whose blood preserves us from the sword of the destroying angel.

God is evidently gratified by this reparation offered to His glory. His heart is in the sacrifice of Calvary, and bids ours go thither. He loves us to realize in this Victim, which is His Son, the length, the breadth, the sublimity, the depth of His charity toward us. But how much more do we gratify Jesus Christ Himself when we meditate on the mystery of His death. It had been His constant desire. He had no other object in coming on earth,

save to redeem us by suffering and dying for us on the cross. He lived only for the cross. He compares His death with a baptism of blood which shall wash away all our crimes: "And how He is straitened until it is accomplished." (Luke, xii. 50.) At the approach of this blessed moment He can contain Himself no longer; this flame of sacred fire must escape from His heart. "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer." On the cross He realized in the most complete manner that which the angels had promised in His name on the day of His birth. "Glory to God . . . peace to men."

God honored as much as He deserves to be; man preserved from the most horrible of all calamities, lifted up to the rank of child of God, and associated to His sovereign felicity. Such are the results of Christ's death. Is not the cross in reality the tree of life? But will it be the tree of life for us if we neglect to nourish our souls with its sacred lessons?

To entertain within us a devout remembrance of His Passion, Jesus Christ not only inspires His Church to place the cross everywhere before our eyes, to engrave the image of His death on wood, on stone, on marble, on gold, and on silver, but offers Himself in the sacrifice of our altars, which is the vivid representation and continuation of the sacrifice of Calvary; and offers His own glorified body, concealed under humble appearances. He gives us a perpetual memorial of that Passion so sorrowful for Him, and so beneficial for us: *Unde et memores . . . tam beatae passionis.*

When, in the celebration of the mysteries, we pronounce those words, we obey the touching recommendation He addressed to His apostles on the eve of His death: "Do this in commemoration of Me," a recommendation which He renewed a moment ago: "As often as ye do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me." This was as much as to say: "Forget not a God who dies in order to save you. In My agonies and My torments, I thought of you; think of Me now, at least when I am present on the altar, to remind you of My death, and to apply its merits to your soul." Wilt thou, O my soul, refuse that consolation to thy God? Wouldst thou neglect a means so certain to gain His affection?

Second Point.—Meditation on the sufferings of Jesus Christ secures the affections of our hearts to God. He who finds all good in Himself, condescends to ask us to give Him a heart which He Himself gave us. "Son, give Me thy heart." This is admirable condescension. But of all the motives which urge us to love God, the most powerful is found in the lesson of the cross.

Love can only be repaid by love. The mystery of the cross is the great excess of God's love for us. If He had left it to our choice

to ask for a token of His great love for man, would any one have dared ask Him to give us the Incarnation, and especially the death of His Son? His goodness anticipated our desires, infinitely surpassed our hopes. Hear Him say to us: "O men, what will you do to bind anew those bonds of charity which united you to your Creator and Father, and which you have so shamefully broken by offending Him? To obtain this you have no power; listen, however, and comprehend, if you can, the love I bear you. I have one only Son, eternally begotten from My substance; He is like Myself; take you this well-beloved Son; to you I give Him, if He will consent; I consent to have Him annihilate Himself to expiate your pride, to have Him die to save you." "God has so loved the world," the world of ungrateful sinners, defiled by all sorts of crimes, for there was no other world when God gave us His Son.

And this Son, in all things equal to the Father, did not shrink from drinking the bitter cup. He saw all the reproaches and sorrows He would have to suffer for us, and He went to meet the blows of God's terrible justice. "Behold, I come, O My Father; I come to offer to Thee all the reparation due to Thy majesty, and which could not be found in the imperfect sacrifices of the Old Law. I, the Penitent of mankind, constitute Myself Thy victim; impose upon Me the weight of all Thy vengeances; strike Thy Son, but spare man." O garden of Olives, O pretorium, O Calvary, how eloquently you speak to us of the love of Jesus for us! Ah, it is time "that they who live may cease to live to themselves, but unto Him who redeemed them by His blood." (2 Cor. v. 15.) What other new blessings do we expect before we give ourselves to God?

We know with what heavenly fire the remembrance of Jesus Christ's sufferings inflamed the hearts of the saints. Looking at the cross, St. Magdalen de Pazzi exclaims: "O love, O love, how little thou art known, how little thou art loved! O souls, created by Jesus' love, and for Jesus' love, why love you not this love?" St. Francis of Assisi, grieved at the hard-heartedness of men, besought the rocks to weep with him over the death of the Son of God. St. Bonaventure said that the sight of the wounds of Christ sufficed to melt hearts of stone, to inflame souls cold as ice.

Cross of Jesus, blood of my God, which give me to understand all the strength of His love, how strongly you reproach me for the weakness of mine toward Him! Does he love a crucified God who seeks to enjoy life and flees from all sufferings? Does he love a God humbled, spit upon, who is desirous of honor, and fears contempt? Achieve Thy conquest, O Lord; come forth in Thy beauty,

in Thy beauty imparted to Thee by the outrages and wounds that Thou hast suffered; submit to Thy power all that is in me, all that depends upon me. (Ps. xliv. 5.) Secure to Thyself a heart ready to turn away from Thee at the very moment that it openly declares its fidelity.

The hour for ascending the altar is about to strike. On this day at least I shall stand upon it with my soul occupied with the remembrance of my Saviour's Passion. Come, O dying Jesus, teach me to die to everything that displeases Thee. I will love a God whose cross has opened heaven for me, whose blood has washed away my iniquities, whose death restored me to life, whose merits entitle me to the hope of loving Him eternally: *Super omnia te mihi amabilem reddit, O bone Jesu, calix quem bibisti, opus nostrae redemptionis. Hoc enim omnino amorem nostrum sibi vindicat, hoc devotionem nostram blandius allicit, justius exigit.* (St. Bern.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— Meditation on the sufferings of Jesus Christ secures for us the friendship of God. The Old Testament and the New is full of this mystery. It was the great object of the thoughts of God. The Lord finds complacency in this admirable reparation made to His outraged glory. His heart is on Calvary and calls ours thither. We never please Jesus Christ so much as when we meditate on the excess of His love, on the mystery of His death; knowing this, the Church places the cross everywhere before our eyes. For this purpose the Saviour offers Himself in the sacrifice of our altars, which is a vivid representation of the sacrifice of Calvary. "Do this in commemoration of Me." Forget not a God who loves you so much as to die for you; and you shall love Him. Wilt thou, O my soul, neglect so propitious a means to gain the affection of thy Judge?

Second Point.—Meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ secures to God the affections of our hearts. I love him who loves Me. It was on the cross that the love of Jesus Christ for us reached its furthest limits. We know with what heavenly fire the remembrance of the Passion filled the souls of the saints.

SECTION THIRD.

From Pentecost to Advent.

PROPER OF THE TIME.

Trinity Sunday.

MEDITATION LXXXIII.

MYSTERY OF THE HOLY TRINITY.

1.—*The Good Priest Honors the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity.*
2.—*He Endeavors to have Others Honor it.*

First Point.—The good priest honors the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. He offers it the threefold homage of his mind, of his heart, and of his imitation.

I. He offers to the Holy Trinity the homage of his mind. He submits his intelligence to the dictates of faith. What more reasonable? He has the declaration of the Son of God who is in the bosom of the Father. (John, i. 18.) Can he wish for any other motive to induce him to believe what the human intellect can not comprehend? He rejoices in sacrificing the noblest part of his nature to God, saying to Him: "I believe, O my God, all that Thou hast revealed concerning this profound mystery; my reason rebels, but I sacrifice my reason to Thy glory. To honor Thy sovereign wisdom I willingly acknowledge my ignorance, and with one of Thy servants, I exclaim: "God is great exceeding our knowledge.'" (Job, xxxvi. 26.) To search into this mystery would, in me, be temerity; to admit it because of Thy word shows my devotion; but to know it fully, to see it face to face, will be my happiness in eternity.

II. Homage of the heart. This mystery, which requires so many sacrifices of our mind, is full of consolation to the heart. The good priest finds ineffable sweetness in considering all the divine blessings in their very beginning. He sees in the Blessed Trinity,

the creation, the Incarnation, the Church, the sacraments, all the personal favors which he receives. He is overcome with joy when he hears each person of the Trinity saying to him: "I loved thee in perpetual charity."

The Church, on this festival day, very wisely leads to that spring, so to speak, of which she has shown us different streams during the liturgical year. She speaks to us of that immense ocean whence flow all the blessings which are imparted to us. She wishes to be grateful to the adorable Trinity, which, finding all its happiness in itself, is ever occupied about ours; for, says St. Paul, God himself chose us before the foundation of the world—the Father chose us for His children, the Son for His brethren, and the Holy Ghost chose us that He might show forth in us the riches of His grace.

The Church, on this account, reminds us continually of the Holy Trinity. At the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of her offices, in the prayers she addresses to God, he ceases not to express her faith in the Father, in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost. She concludes all her psalms, her hymns, her canticles by returning glory to the Holy Trinity. She wants her ministers to repeat a hundred times a day, the "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," so strong is her conviction that she cannot address praise more pleasing to God, a prayer more suited to draw down upon us all the gifts of His grace.

III. Homage of imitation. In this mystery we adore the unity of nature and the trinity of persons; a pious priest endeavors to honor the unity by sincerely loving and being united to all men; he honors the Trinity by doing all possible good.

It is certain that one of the ends of the Incarnation was to form, on earth, an image of the unity which is in God, for this is one of the special graces which Jesus asked for His disciples on the eve of His Passion: "That they may be one, as we also are one." O priest of God, will you not become thoroughly imbued with that which St. Paul wished to see in all Christians, but which is still more necessary for those who are their models and guides: "Careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace"? (Ephes. iv. 3.) As the Trinity subsists by ineffable communications, the Father pouring out all the treasures of its essence into the bosom of the Son, the Father and the Son giving all their divinity to the Holy Ghost, so should we perfect our union by making it fruitful through works of charity. Upon us, ministers of God, innumerable favors are lavished—less for ourselves than for others. The more zealous we are for the sanctification of others, the more will the Almighty show Himself generous toward us. "Give, and it shall be given to you." Listen, this very day, to your Saviour,

exhorting you to practice fraternal charity; for in the Gospel read at the end of Mass you find these words: "Be ye merciful, as your Father is merciful."

Second Point.—The good priest endeavors to have others honor the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, by carefully and assiduously teaching the faithful concerning this fundamental point of our faith, and by exciting the hearts of the faithful to devotion.

I. St. Jerome admires how wisely Jesus Christ commanded the apostles, first, to teach the doctrine of faith, and next to confer the sacrament which gave it: *Ordo praecipuus: jussit apostolis ut primum docerent universas gentes, deinde fidei intingerent sacramento.* (Comm. in Matt. i, 4.) It is to be feared that there are many Catholics who do not sufficiently understand this all-important mystery. Pastors should give frequent instructions on this great subject in their instructions, using the language approved by the Church. This truth is necessarily surrounded with obscurity: seek not to explain it as if you wanted the mystery to disappear.

Whenever we give instructions upon it, let us declare distinctly that there is nothing so impenetrable to the human mind, yet at the same time so evident to the eye of faith. Let us, with a holy Doctor, be consoled for not understanding what God does not wish us to understand. "The archangels, with all their light, cannot penetrate the depth of this doctrine; the angels themselves have not learned it; the most enlightened ages did not suspect it; the prophets had but a confused knowledge of it; the explanation of it the great Apostle never asked, neither did Our Lord Jesus Christ ever give it; let us not complain of our ignorance." (St. Hilary.)

II. While instructing the minds, let us excite the hearts to devotion. A good priest teaches the faithful that in the Church all spiritual gifts are distributed in the name of the Holy Trinity; it is in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost that they are regenerated in baptism, and strengthened in grace by Confirmation; in that name they receive the pardon of their sins, the blessings of the priests, all the hope of religion. The good priest tells his people how to sanctify their labors and all their actions by beginning them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He points out to them that Holy Trinity, not in heaven and in our churches only, but in every place and within themselves; he inspires them with respect for its holy presence.

Recollect yourself at this very moment in presence of the supreme majesty. Ask yourself have you honored, and induced others to honor this mystery? Have you spoken of it often enough? Did

you not consider a dogma which is the foundation of all Christian morality, since it is the principle of that charity by which we are united to God and to our brethren, foreign to the subject of morals? Consecrate anew to the three divine persons the three faculties of your soul: the memory to the Father, the intellect to the Son, the will to the Holy Ghost. O Jesus, by whom we belong more especially to the Blessed Trinity, since Thou hast marked us with its seal, imprinting in our souls the sacred characters of baptism and of priestly consecration, vouchsafe to associate us to the perpetual homages Thou dost offer to it in heaven and in our tabernacles! Grant to Thy priests to lead a life so perfect that it may be a continual praise, and an every-day preparation to the eternal praise of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: *Benedicamus Patrem et Filium cum Sancto Spiritu; laudemus et super exaltemus eum in saecula. Amen.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—A good priest honors the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. I. By faith he pays it the homage of his mind. His faith in this mystery gives more glory to God from the fact that it demands a greater sacrifice of his reason. O my God, I love to acknowledge my ignorance, to honor Thy infinite knowledge: *Scrutari temeritas, credere pietas, nosse aeterna felicitas.* II. He offers the Holy Trinity the homage of his heart by hoping and loving. He loves to contemplate in this mystery the source of all divine blessings. He is filled with joy when he hears each of the three persons saying to him: "I have loved thee in perpetual charity." III. He offers to it the homage of his imitation. In this mystery he adores the unity of nature and the trinity of persons. The good priest endeavors to honor the Unity by sincerely loving and being united to all men. He honors the Trinity by doing unto others all the good that is in his power to do.

Second Point.—A good priest endeavors to have others honor the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, by carefully teaching the faithful concerning this fundamental point. No other part of Catholic doctrine needs to be inculcated with greater care, treated with greater prudence. A good priest also uses this mystery as a means to lead his people to the practice of a pious life.

Corpus Christi.

MEDITATION LXXXIV.

THE FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT.

1.—*Why has the Church Established this Feast?*
2.—*What should the Priest do to Solemnize this Feast?*

First Point.—Object of the Church in establishing this feast of the Blessed Sacrament. In this "memorial of divine wonders" our mind is engrossed with the humiliations of the Son of God; our hearts, however, should be touched with the love which Jesus Christ shows us in the Eucharist. Often, alas, we respond to His blessings by ingratitude, and to the humiliations which He chose to suffer we add neglect, not to say insult. Now the Church, impressed with the remembrance of these offences, endeavors on this day to make us honor the voluntary humiliations of Our Saviour by gratitude, and to make us atone for our own indifference.

I. In no other of His mysteries is Our Lord Jesus Christ so humiliated as in the Eucharist. In every other mystery or circumstance of His life, if His divinity be partly concealed for a time it soon reveals itself; even on Calvary, amid the insults which they heap upon Him, they can perceive in Him the Son of God. "Indeed this man was the Son of God." (Mark, xv. 39.) But in the Eucharist, far from appearing to be God, He does not show any resemblance to man. Yet He performs miracles in the Holy Eucharist. St. Thomas calls this mystery: *Maximum miraculum Christi.* (Opus 57.) Still, while the prodigies which shone forth at His birth, during His life, and at His death, were destined to manifest His grandeur, the miracles which He multiplies in the Eucharist surround Him with incomprehensible mystery. Ah, if those humiliations awe us, how much should we be touched by the love which suffers them?

Incomprehensible as are these sufferings, the Saviour had to take them upon Himself to realize the designs of His generous tenderness for man. He desired to dwell among us, that we might fully understand His most tender friendship; He desired to renew His immolation continually, and, in a manner, to identify Himself with us by giving us His flesh to be our food and His blood to be our drink. "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." "Because this mystery," says St. Bernard, "is the love of loves,

it was also the sacrifice of sacrifices." Consider well, then, the lesson we should learn.

The more the Son of God lowered His infinite greatness in the Eucharist, the more we are bound to exalt it by our homage. The Church has done this by instituting a feast which is the triumph of Jesus Christ annihilated in the Holy Sacrament. This is a public triumph; not in His churches only is He adored to-day; He is borne with solemnity through the midst of His people; every knee bows down in His presence. This triumph is universal. Go where you choose, there you will see the children of the Church prostrate before the Saviour present in the Holy Eucharist. It is a wonderful triumph of the devotion and joy of the faithful. Our grateful love glorifies Christ for the deep humiliations which He sought, in order to unite Himself to us. Such was the first object of the Church in the institution of this festival. Following is the second motive of that institution:

II. To the voluntary humiliations of the Saviour in this mystery, men add others; to humiliations which appease the anger of Heaven, they add those which excite its wrath; hence to manifestations of gratitude we must add expressions of amendment.

Three objects meet our eyes in our sanctuaries, each of which speaks most eloquently of the excessive love of Jesus Christ, and of the ingratitude wherewith we repay His most generous blessings. We have there the tabernacle wherein He dwells; the altar on which He is immolated; the holy table at which He is the living bread of His disciples. Is there any of these three objects that does not remind us of Jesus Christ wantonly abandoned and more wantonly insulted?

Where are the faithful eager to honor His presence by visiting Him? to honor His sacrifice by assistance at it? to honor His heavenly banquet by participating in it? They care nothing for the favors of a God. They are anxious to please men, are attentive toward those whose services they may find necessary. It would seem as if Jesus alone deserved no regard, that from Him alone nothing is either to be hoped for or feared. Again, is there not much tepidity in the visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and in the so-called honors which are paid to it by the very Christians who pretend to have some devotion toward it? After a few moments in His presence they give way to weariness. In any other place they would strive to conquer this feeling, but find it impossible when in the company of the Lord of heaven, and according to the energetic saying of Tertullian: *Solius Dei impatientes sumus.* Thou, however, O Jesus, dost patiently bear this impatience, and with ineffable mercy Thou dost abide in hearts which can not

abide in Thee. Did the Jews deserve as much as we the reproach which Thou didst address to them? "O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?" (Matt. xvii. 16.)

This, however, is the least of our offences against our God of the Eucharist. We are not satisfied with forgetting or neglecting Him. What of the irreverences, of the sacrileges and profanations committed against Him at this present time and during nineteen hundred years before this day? *Cor Jesu, etiam nunc ab ingratis hominibus in sanctissimo amoris sacramento dilaceratum, miserere nobis!* Such is the language used by fervent souls in their sorrow. But this solitary reparation does not suffice. The Church wishes to have a solemn reparation; and this feast is not only intended as an ovation to her divine Spouse, but also as a solemn act of penance on the part of her children. Knowing that the most frightful retributions await those who have "trodden under their feet the Son of God and deemed His blood unclean," she makes use of this extraordinary display to renew our faith, causing, as it were, this dreadful majesty to appear before us, inducing us to appease His anger by humbling ourselves in His presence. She invites us to unite our homage to her homage, our tears to her tears.

Second Point.—What should the priest do to enter into the spirit of this feast? Love of the Holy Eucharist should be first among his devotions, since this mystery is the great glory of his priesthood, and the most abundant source of the consolations which he experiences. He, therefore, zealously avails himself of the occasion which is offered to-day to honor the Blessed Sacrament, and to promote its honor. Why can he not draw all men with him to the feet of a God who loves men so tenderly? He uses every means to encourage the faithful to contribute to the exterior beauty of this triumph of Christ Jesus. He instructs his people concerning the object and meaning of this ceremony; and when he carries the heavenly King in the midst of them, their faith will be re-animated at the sight of the imposing pageant. They will imagine that they see the Saviour going through towns and villages as of yore, casting out devils, healing the sick; they will beseech Him to bless their houses, their projects, their labors, and it will be said of Him once more, that He spent His life in doing good. That, however, which principally draws the grace of God on the flock is the prayer of the pastor, and that which rejoices the angels and edifies the faithful are his modesty and his profound recollection in the exercise of so holy a function. "We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men." (1 Cor. iv. 9.)

To adoration and praise, the good priest adds reparation for the

insults offered to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. We are too little grieved at these insults. It is true that the humanity of the Son of God, having entered into glory, can not suffer as during His mortal life; but consider the insults which He still endures on earth. "Consider well what I say: The body of the Saviour does, most certainly, suffer much more from us in the Eucharist than it did from the Jews during His Passion; then it only suffered for a time; here it will suffer to the end of ages; in His Passion it suffered as much only as Jesus Christ allowed, and because He consented; but here it suffers, as it were, through force and violence. It suffered during His Passion, but it was then in the state of a nature liable to suffer and to die; but in the Eucharist, it suffers by being in the very state of immortality. The corporal sufferings of Christ on earth were glorious to God and useful to men; but what He suffers in this mystery is injurious to God and injurious to men." (Bourdaloue.) Let us renew the resolution so often taken, to be more zealous in honoring the Blessed Sacrament: *Tantum ergo sacramentum veneremur cernui.—Jesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio, oro, fiat illud quod tam sitio, ut te revelata cernens facie, visu sim beatus tuae gloriae!*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— Object of the Church in establishing the feast of Corpus Christi. It was to honor the humiliations to which Our Lord voluntarily submitted Himself in the Holy Eucharist; to make amends for those which He suffers from the ingratitude of men. In no one of His other mysteries did the Saviour humble Himself so deeply, and these humiliations were necessary for the accomplishment of His designs of mercy toward us. The more He lowers His infinite greatness for our sake, the more we should exalt it by acts of homage. Such is the motive of this public, universal, glorious feast. But to those voluntary humiliations prompted by His love, men add outrages and profanations. In His tabernacle, on His altar, at His table, I see Him cruelly abandoned and even insulted. What grief for a good priest!

Second Point.—What should I do to enter into the spirit of this feast? Avail myself of the opportunity to promote His honor, contribute to the glory of His triumph, rejoice over the homage He receives, strive to repair the outrages offered to Him, instruct my people carefully concerning the nature of this feast, renew the resolution to be more zealous in honoring this great Sacrament: *Tantum ergo sacramentum, veneremur cernui.*

MEDITATION LXXXV.

PREPARATION FOR MASS.

1.—*It is Necessary.*

2.—*Jesus, by His Example, Teaches Us how to Prepare for Mass.*

First Point.—Preparation for Mass necessary. This is understood by every priest. "If we must needs confess that no other work can be performed by the faithful so holy and divine as this tremendous mystery itself, wherein that life-giving Victim, by which we were reconciled to the Father, is daily immolated on the altar by priests; it is also sufficiently clear that the utmost care and even scrupulousness should be used, that it be performed with the greatest possible inward cleanness and purity of heart, and outward show of devotion and piety." (Counc. Trent, sec. xxii.) This means that we ought to prepare. If you undertake this angelical function without recollecting your mind and purifying your heart, and this at the very moment that you are about presenting yourself before the throne of God, in the name and in the interests of all creatures, will you not be guilty of grievous irreverence, will you not change the most salutary and sanctifying of all mysteries into an occasion of sin and of death?

In the mysteries of the holy altar there is nothing to affect the senses. If, before their celebration, I do not wake up in me this living faith which pierces the cloud, I shall soon dishonor them by my tepidity, and expose myself to the dreadful evil of profaning them. O Priest, often meditate on, and fill your mind with, the reflections of a pious and learned cardinal.

Pauci sunt qui admirabiles hujus sacri convivii in se sentiant effectus, quia pauci sunt qui se ad illos recipiendos rite disponant, qui serio cogitent se ad Sancta sanctorum accedere, ad altare Dei, ad Deum ipsum. Ideo multi sunt imfirmi et imbecilles, et dormiunt multi. Mortem olim summo sacerdoti minabatur Deus, si ausus fuisset introire in Sancta sanctorum sine strepitu tintinnabulorum, non radians gemmis, non fulgens auro, omnium virtutum varietate circumamictus: quam ergo poenam merebitur novae legis sacerdos, qui non ad arcam typicam, sed ad Deum ipsum accedit, ut Filium ejus Dominum Jesum Christum immolet, tangat, comedat, nisi id faciat ea solicitudine, attentione, et apparatu, qui dignus sit tali convivio, dignus Deo? Instante itaque celebratione, totis viribus curare debet ut in ara cordis ignem divini amoris succendat, actusque

eliciat diversarum virtutum, qui heroici sint, et tanto sacrificio, quantum fieri poterit, convenientes. (Bona. de Miss celeb. ch. v.) How should we prepare?

Second Point.—Jesus Christ, by His example, shows us how to prepare for the Holy Sacrifice. The whole life of the Saviour prepared Him for His immolation on the cross: He made it the continual occupation of His mind and of His heart. "With desire I have desired." The good priest makes his whole life a preparation for the great function which he accomplishes on the altar. To the holy Mass he refers not only his breviary, so intimately connected with the Mass, not only his evening examinations and morning meditation, but also all his good works, all his actions and mortifications, everything, in a word; and he uses everything as a means to celebrate it worthily. Let us often, let us habitually, think on the Mass, especially at the end of the day. It is so good to go to sleep with the thought in our mind: "To-morrow again I shall sit down at the table of the great King." (Esther, v. 12.) If you, however, desire an admirable example of immediate preparation, you will find it in the heart of Our Lord preparing Himself, on the eve of His death, for His two-fold immolation, the mystical one on the altar, the bloody one on Calvary. "Jesus knowing that His hour was come . . . knowing that the Father had given Him all things in His hands, and that He came from God and goes to God, He rises from supper . . . and began to wash the feet of the disciples." (John, xiii.)

Jesus knows the power which His Father has given Him. He knows His own dignity; God of God, He is in everything equal to His Father; He came from God. He is not ignorant of the sublimity of His mission, or of the great interests connected with it; to glorify God through the salvation of the world has been the end of His Incarnation and of His life, the object of His death. "He goes to God." And you also, O Priest, when you are about to ascend the altar, think on the immense power you are about to exercise, on the infinite dignity of the person whom you represent, of the sovereign importance of the affairs of which you are about to treat, and entertain the sentiments which these reflections will suggest.

I. Extent of your powers. Of you it may soon be said, as it was of the adorable Redeemer: "The Father gave Him all things in His hands." How great your power when the Almighty will be, as it were, subject to your empire! When all the treasures of the divine mercy will be opened to you, you shall have power to break the captive's chains, to wipe away the tears of the sorrowful, to give happiness to those who suffer. Let your confidence be as

extensive as those powers; and know how to use to your spiritual advantage, to that of your brethren and of the whole world, the boundless credit you shall obtain with God through the spotless Victim you are about to offer Him. Have only one fear, that is, not to hope enough. In a few moments you shall have in your hands a pledge much more precious than all the favors which you shall dare to ask.

II. Whom are you about to represent by continuing His sacrifice? Let the thought sink deep in your heart: I am going to lend my voice, my hands, my ministry, to the great and one priest, Jesus Christ; I am going to show Him to the world, for He shall be within me, speaking and working out the most astonishing prodigies. Now, *ubi Christus est, ibi quoque modestia.* (Greg. Naz.) Regulate your countenance, your bearing, all your exterior, according to the gravity and modesty of the Son of God, that you may, while rejoicing heaven by your interior disposition, edify the faithful by your exterior appearance. Endeavor to be so pure, so devout, so worthy, of the divine Priest whose place you hold, that He who sees things the most secret, may say of you on the altar: "This is My beloved son in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. iii. 18.)

III. Ask yourself to whom and for what end you are about to offer the sacrifice. You offer it to a God infinitely great in power, kind in mercy, severe in justice, to a God who could not be honored as He deserved to be did He not have a God for Adorer and Victim You offer it in the name of the whole Church, and for the same ends which Our Saviour had in view when He immolated Himself on Calvary. Let the four following intentions be present to your mind and heart: This sacrifice is a *holocaust.* God will, therefore, be honored as God should be: He will be honored as much as He deserves to be honored. "According to Thy name, O God, also is Thy praise." (Ps. xlvii. 11.) It is a sacrifice of *thanksgiving.* The most magnificent expression of our gratitude to God is the offering to Him of the most excellent of His gifts. By offering to Him Jesus Christ, do we not return to Him as much as He has given us? It is a sacrifice of *propitiation.* Are there sins, be they ever so numerous, which can not be effaced by one Mass—by the sorrows, the tears, the death of Jesus Christ? It is a sacrifice of *impetration.* Prayer is of itself very powerful; but how much greater its power when He who prays with us is God, and when He offers for us the blood and wounds with which He is covered, and the abyss of reproaches into which He is plunged!

Finally, as a last preparation for Mass, behold Our Saviour, as "He rises from supper." He humbles Himself, not in presence

of His Father only—see Him kneeling at the feet of His disciples! "He began to wash the feet of the disciples." What a lesson given us by Purity and Innocence. Shall we ever be pure enough to behold without fear this altar of God which causes the saints themselves to tremble? Lesson of humility. A God making Himself the servant of men! Lesson of charity. Jesus washing the feet of His apostles, who will soon forsake Him, even washing the feet of Judas! Because you are about to be raised to the highest rank of honor humble yourself. "The greater thou art, the more humble thou shouldst be in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God." (Eccles. iii. 20.)

O my God! had I always prepared myself in this manner before ascending the altar, I should experience no anxiety at the remembrance of so many sacrifices for which I will have to give an account. From this day at least, I will treat these holy mysteries with so great a respect that I may find therein the graces of true sanctification. I will henceforth eat the sacred bread and drink the heavenly chalice with a faith so lively, so profound, that these may be really for my soul, the bread of eternal life, the chalice of perpetual salvation. *Panem sanctum vitae aeternae, et calicem salutis perpetuae.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point—Necessity of preparation for the Holy Sacrifice. To enter abruptly upon this angelical function; to take no time to recollect your mind and purify your heart would be committing a grave irreverence, exposing yourself to a terrible danger. In our sacred mysteries there is nothing for the senses; if, before commencing the celebration, I do not awaken within me the faith which pierces the clouds, I will soon dishonor them by my tepidity. Will I be able to avoid profaning them?

Second Point.—Manner of preparing to offer the sacrifice. The whole life of Our Saviour was but a preparation for His bloody sacrifice; the whole life of the good priest prepares him to offer the unbloody sacrifice. An admirable model of proximate preparation in these words of St. John: "Jesus, knowing that His hour was come . . . knowing that His Father had given Him all things in His hands, and that He came from God, and goes to God, He rises from supper . . . and began to wash the feet of His disciples." Reflect on the greatness of the powers which I am about to exercise; everything shall be placed in my hands; I am about to show Jesus Christ to the world. I will accomplish on the altar that which He accomplished on the cross. The Saviour

humbles Himself. He washes the feet of His disciples and of Judas. What a lesson of humility, of charity!

MEDITATION LXXXVI.

THANKSGIVING AFTER MASS.

1.—*A Duty Commanded by Gratitude.*
2.—*It Procures for Us the Greatest Blessings.*
3.—*Its Omission a Sinful Irreverence.*

First Point.—Thanksgiving after Mass is a duty commanded by gratitude. God is offended by ingratitude. He commands us to be grateful. Nearly all the feasts established by Himself under the Old Law and by the Church under the New owe their institution to some signal favor, of which He desired to perpetuate the remembrance. Each of them is an appeal to our gratitude. The Jews had their offerings of peace, their sacrifices of thanksgiving; we have the sacrifice of the Mass whose first end is to recall to our minds the mysteries of our redemption. "Do this in commemoration of Me." It is pre-eminently the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Though there never was a heart so free from self-interest as the heart of the Saviour, He complained, when, in exchange for blessings conferred, He received but ingratitude. "Were not ten made clean, and where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God but this stranger." (Luc. xvii. 17.) I have proved the love which I bear you by the many good works performed among you: "For which of these do you stone me?" (John, x. 32.)

To return thanks to God is an obligation of justice, as we proclaim before entering upon the great action of the sacrifice: *Vere dignum et justum est . . . nos tibi semper et ubique gratias agere.* But if, at all times and everywhere, gratitude should dwell in our hearts because God does at all times and everywhere lavish His blessings upon us, how much more should it be so when we have received the gift of Himself from His hands.

There are three things in a gift which claim our gratitude: the value of the gift, the affection which it supposes in the donor, the preference exhibited to the recipient. O Priest of God, when you come down from the altar what is the treasure that you carry? What have you received? *Audeo dicere quod Deus cum sit omni-*

potens plus dare non potuit; cum sit sapientissimus, plus dare nescivit; cum sit ditissimus plus dare non habuit. (St. Aug. Tr. 84 in Joan.) What is wanting to you when you possess Jesus Christ, His body, His soul, His divinity, when He permits you to repeat to Him familiarly that which He said to His Father: "Whatever is Thine is mine"? The words which St. Francis de Sales loved to repeat—"he who has Jesus has all," is for you a consoling reality.

Is it not to the love of Jesus Christ alone that you are indebted for the Treasure which contains all graces? O my God, Thou hadst nothing to gain in this alliance with Thy unworthy creatures; in giving Thyself to me Thou hast consulted only Thine infinite goodness. In this great charity toward me, I notice a preference which ought to move the hardest heart. When I remember that the privilege of touching what I touch, of eating what I eat, of doing what I do, was not granted to any of the great men of the Old Testament, such as Moses, Abraham, Jeremias; nor under the New Law to the holy precursor of whom Thou saidst: "There has not risen a greater than John the Baptist"; when I think that so many people, either through infidelity or heresy, are deprived of holy communion, and that even among the children of Thy Church the holy table is approached only by the smaller number; when I consider that I am one of the privileged mortals who may partake of it every day; that I may, in a manner, call the Bread of angels my own, since I distribute it to others—I ask myself, O my God, how great should be my gratitude toward Thee. "O my soul, bless the Lord."

Second Point.—Thanksgiving after Mass is a duty from which we may derive inappreciable benefits. The presence of Jesus Christ within us, the dispositions of His heart toward us, the state of sacrifice in which He presents Himself to His Father, everything concurs to make the time that follows the celebration of Mass the most precious of our whole life.

Before your Mass you adored the Son of God in heaven and in the tabernacle; during the Mass you adored Him on the altar and in your own hands. Where do you adore Him now, where is He? "He abideth in me and I in Him." Blessed that moment at which you can apply your lips to the side of Jesus, and drink at that spring of all graces! Do you not hear Him placing His omnipotence and His infinite wealth at your disposal? "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" He is within your heart.

According to many good theologians, acts of virtue done immediately after communion have a special merit as being the work of a soul intimately united to the soul of the Son of God.

Whatever you do then by the inspiration of His holy Spirit, He does with you; you adore and He adores, you return thanks and He returns thanks. Your acts, identified with His, may be said to be divinely human. Never did God look upon you with so much complacency as at this time.

In what state does He see His Son within you? He sees Him reduced to nothingness, sacrificing Himself for His Church and for you. While the moments pass unperceived angels admire wonderful operations going on within you; upon your heart, as upon a living altar, Jesus actually sacrifices Himself to His Father, adoring, thanking, imploring His mercy. What will the Father refuse Him at such a time, if you yourself put no obstacle to the designs of His love?

Third Point.—To neglect giving thanks after Mass would be sinful irreverence. The apostle St. John said of the traitor: "He, having received the morsel, went out immediately." (xvi. 30.) Do we not, alas, see imitators of Judas among some of our priests? They have hardly left the altar when they hasten to put off the sacerdotal vestments. They listen to every one that will speak to them, excepting to Jesus Christ alone, who would have so many things to say, who is ready to confer so many benefits upon them; and, after a few formal prayers, recited without attention, they carry their adorable Guest into the midst of business or to frivolous conversations, forgotten in their hearts like a dead man in his grave.

Where is your faith? What blindness in a priest! Even before you had received the Son of God, you had invited all hearts to return thanks: *Sursum corda. . . . Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro.* And now you fail in this duty when it has become for you an absolute obligation. A moment ago you declared that you did not deserve to become the dwelling of so holy a God: *Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum.* And as soon as He has given Himself to you you think of Him no longer, you find nothing to say to Him, you have no homage to offer to His majesty, no favor to ask. This is He, however, of whom the Church sings: *O res mirabilis, manducat Dominum pauper.* What if His most generous love turned to wrath when you sin in so offensive a manner against the greatest of all mysteries?

Consider what St. John Chrysostom says on this matter: *Audiamus, et sacerdotes et subditi. . . . Durum fortasse videbitur quod sum dicturus; sed necesse est tamen, ut ob plerorumque negligentiam, dicatur. Quando ultimae coenae communicavit Judas . . . , caeteris omnibus recumbentibus, ipse se proripiens excessit; illum imitantur et isti, qui ante gratiarum actionem discedunt.* To thus

treat the Son of God, continues the holy Doctor, *non meidocrem conemptum habet;* and a few lines lower he adds: *Quid est aliud quam extremo supplicio sese obnoxium reddere?* (Hom. de Bapt. Chr.)

Examine yourself seriously concerning this grave obligation. How have you accomplished it? If your conscience reproach you with any grievous negligence in this matter, pray Our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive you before celebrating the holy Sacrifice on this day. Promise to consecrate at least a quarter of an hour to your thanksgiving after Mass, and be on your guard against the pretexts which lukewarm priests bring forward for shortening a time which is already too short: *Nullum certe pietatis sensum habere convincitur, qui non libenter cum Deo manet. Nec valent praetextus negotiorum, vel studii, quibus se tepidi excusant; quod enim gravius et utilius negotium, quam de animae salute cum Deo tractare? vel quid possunt docere libri, quod non Deus praesens melius doceat.* (Bona. Cap. vi.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Thanksgiving after Mass is a duty commanded by gratitude. God loves to see us grateful. Jesus complains when men fail in this duty. "Ten lepers have I healed; one alone returns thanks. Where are the other nine?" If at all times and in every place we are bound to return thanks to God, *Semper et ubique*, how much more at the foot of the altar on which we exercise so glorious a ministry and receive a gift which surpasses every other gift? "Who possesses Jesus, possesses all." In what manner and through what motive did He give Himself to me? Great saints of the Old Dispensation, you never received communion; and under the New Law, how few souls are as favored as I in this respect!

Second Point.—Inappreciable benefits we may derive from thanksgiving after Mass. Jesus Christ is now no longer in heaven, in the tabernacle and on the altar only; He is within your heart. With you and for you He adores, He prays, He returns thanks. Unite yourself to Him, and your acts, identified with His, shall have an infinite value. Moreover, in what state does God the Father behold His well-beloved Son within you? Your heart is a living altar upon which Jesus sacrifices Himself. Can God refuse you anything at such a moment.

Third Point.—To omit thanksgiving is a grievous irreverence. Judas, as soon as he had communicated, withdrew. Do not they who make no thanksgiving imitate this first profanation of the holy table? Before the consecration you had declared aloud:

Vere dignum et justum est; and now, after receiving communion, you return no thanks. You proclaimed yourself unworthy to receive Him: *Domine, non sum dignus;* and now, after receiving Him, you do not think of Him, you have nothing to say to Him.

MEDITATION LXXXVII.

MANNER OF MAKING THE THANKSGIVING AFTER MASS.

It were desirable that a priest had need of no method to show him how to spend the precious moments which follow the offering of the sacrifice; and that, following the inspiration of grace, he would for some time contemplate the Saviour within him, hear Him in profound silence, and for a while speak to Him under the influence of this divine presence. But as even in this moment we often feel the necessity of keeping down our imagination, and of directing our interior faculties, we shall here endeavor to help those who find it difficult to converse with God at a time when this practice ought to be so easy. In this exercise, as in that of meditation, we may distinguish three different parts:

1.—*The Preparation of Our Thanksgiving.*
2.—*The Thanksgiving Proper.*
3.—*The Conclusion of Our Thanksgiving.*

First Point.—This preparation consists in three acts: Admiration, adoration, love.

I. As soon as the good priest has divested himself of the sacred vestments, and recited the prescribed canticle *benedicite,* he withdraws to a place of recollection, and here, secreting himself with Jesus Christ in the sanctuary of his own heart, he silences himself and all creatures. "The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him." (Habac. ii. 20.) In silent admiration he contemplates the King of the universe. In presence of this great and sweet majesty, he suspends all the motions of his soul, allowing the adorable presence of Jesus to penetrate him, transform all his faculties, to take possession of his whole self, and to substitute a divine for a human life. There is no way more proper to honor God, no way more in keeping with our nothingness, than this temporary cessation of all action, of all application of the mind, and, as it were, of all personal life in

His presence. This is to confess that He is infinitely above, not only our praises, but above all our thoughts; it is offering His infinite being the homage of all that we are; it is saying to Him: "Lord, who is like unto Thee?" (Ps. xxxiv. 10.)

II. In profound recollection, adore with Mary the Word who was incarnate in her virginal womb, and who now dwells in you. The more He has humbled Himself the more you should debase yourself in His presence. Adore this God-adorer who annihilates Himself for you before His Father. Call upon all the powers of your soul, all the senses of your body, and say to them: "Come, let us adore, and fall down before the Lord," just as one who receiving a prince in his house would call all his servants, his friends, and relatives to do him honor. Unite your adorations to those of the angels prostrate around you at this moment. Invite them to adore Him in you and with you. "Adore Him, all ye His angels."

III. Love is, however, the sentiment which should predominate in your heart. What would you do with your heart were you not to give it to Him, who, in order to possess it, offers such powerful attractions? What goodness, what kindness, what self-forgetfulness, in order to think of you! You have placed fire in your bosom; will you prevent it from burning? Love does everything in the thanksgiving of the good priest; love adores, love admires, love also will produce all the acts which will follow.

Second Point.—The thanksgiving proper consists also of three principal acts: The thanksgiving, the prayer, the offering.

I. You, upon whom the divine favors were lavished, are deputed by the whole Church to offer the great Benefactor of the universe the gratitude due Him. By ascending the altar you accepted the mission of returning thanks to God for all the blessings He conferred on mankind, and particularly on the inhabitants of the heavenly country. What do they not owe Thee, O my God! O you apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, but you especially, queen of all the saints, the most privileged and the most grateful of all creatures, what will you return to the Lord for all the blessings you have received from Him? You invite me to glorify Him with you. "Magnify the Lord with me." This I do. For you and for me I return thanks to Him. How sweet it is for me to acquire claims to your gratefulness in helping you to pay off your debt of gratitude! Immense as is my and your indebtedness to Him, it is now in my power to requite them. He gave me His Son, the splendor of His glory, the object of His eternal complacency. This well-beloved Son is the One who in this moment, within me, praises and thanks Him in the name

of the whole Church of which He is the head. Church of earth, Church of heaven, let us praise, let us bless Him for the granting of a gift which enables us worthily to acknowledge all His gifts. "Thanks to God for this unspeakable gift!"

II. Prayer. Since the moment Christ entered your heart, all power was given you. Through the boundless power which you have over Him, and through Him over His Father, you have become in a manner like unto the incomparable Virgin: *Omnipotentia supplex;* pray, therefore, for yourself and for all the souls whose salvation is dear to you. Expand your desires, for Jesus says to you: I am able, I am willing to satisfy them. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Ps. lxxx. 11.)

Pray for the just, for sinners, for those who shall die to-day, but particularly for the clergy whose sanctification procures so much glory to God, and so many blessings to mankind. You may make use of the prayer of Our Saviour after the Last Supper. "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee." (John xvii. 1.) How admirable those words in the mouth of a priest who has just offered Mass!

"Father!" Taste the sweetness of this name. Father, Thou art indeed my Father! I feel this, I understand it. A father's duty is to give food to his children; and what is the food Thou hast just given me? Father, my Father, for Jesus Christ is Thy Son, and at this moment I am one with Jesus Christ. "He is in me, and I am in Him." His blood flows through my veins, the beatings of His heart are the beatings of my heart; beholding me, behold Him! What wilt Thou not grant to the prayers of Jesus, which are also my prayers? "The hour is come," O my Father, the hour favorable to the designs of Thy love. The hour is come in which to show Thyself what Thou art: the best, the most tender, the most generous of Fathers; the hour in which to give me the light, the help, the grace which I desire or ought to desire; nay, to lavish them upon me, beyond all my desire, for Thy Son, who is within me, who prays for me and with me, deserves infinitely more than all that I can ask of Thee.

"Glorify Thy Son." Jesus has been zealous to promote Thy glory, O my Father; do Thou glorify Him now. It was to glorify Thee that He humbled Himself, and at this very moment annihilates Himself before Thee on the altar of my heart. O Lord, grant Him the glory which He desires. The glory of the charitable rich is to succor the indigent, that of a physician is to heal, that of a Saviour is to save. This favor grant Him, O holy Father. Permit it not to be said that He came to visit a sick man and did not cure him; that He visited a poor man or a repentant

sinner and did not assist or sanctify him. "That Thy Son may glorify Thee! O Father of Jesus, and my Father, if Thou dost grant me this favor, Thou shalt be glorified, not by me, but by Thy Son in me. He shall be in my heart to inflame it with the fire of Thy love; in my mind to inspire it with holy projects; in my mouth to praise Thee and proclaim Thy word; in all the works of my ministry in order to bless them. Sinners shall be converted, the tepid shall become fervent, and the glory of all shall return to Thee.

III. Offering. First offer yourself to Jesus Christ, and next offer Jesus Christ to His Father. The Son of God has given Himself to you, He asks you to give yourself to Him. To a friend so generous make an entire, full surrender of yourself, trusting to Him all your anxieties for time and for eternity; have no care but to please Him, let Him act and live in you as in a house of which He is the sole Master. You have a beautiful model of this offering in the prayer, *Suscipe Domine.* And since Jesus Christ is yours, offer Him to His Father according to His intention; He has been given to you that He might make up for all your deficiencies. What can be wanting, what have you to fear, when He is with you?

Are you disquieted because of the insufficiency of your homage, which, humanly considered, is indeed nothing? Behold within you God disappearing in the presence of God, placing Himself, as it were, under His feet; through Him you render the Almighty a homage as great as Himself is great. Are you alarmed at the remembrance of your sins, the imperfection of your penances, your lack of virtue? Offer to God the penance which Jesus Christ accomplished for you; offer to Him the contrition of His Sacred Heart, the sorrow of His soul, the suffering of His body; for all those belong to you. Offer the holiness of His life to repair the defilement of yours. Let His virtues compensate for your vices, His meekness for your impatience, His humility for your pride. Say to Him, I am unable, O my God, of myself to honor Thee The darkness of my mind, the vagaries of my imagination do not permit me to have a thought worthy of Thee; but I offer to Thee the thoughts of Jesus, the praise which He now renders Thee in my heart, the praise which He will render to Thee in heaven during all eternity. I grieve at the coldness of my heart; but I offer Thee the heart of Thy Son with all the ardor of His burning charity. Through this divine heart which Thou hast given me I love Thee. Ask not the question which grieved St. Peter: Lovest Thou me? For I should answer Thee as he did, but with entire assurance. Yes, O Lord, I love Thee—and with

my love Thou shouldst be satisfied, since it draws an infinite perfection from the heart of Jesus present in me.

Third Point.—The conclusion of the thanksgiving consists in resolving to manifest by works the protestation of the gratitude and devotion offered to Jesus Christ. When one has received such an evidence of His love, he is impatient to prove his own affection. Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? I am ready to undertake and to suffer everything for Thy glory: Labors, fatigues, contradictions, humiliations. My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready! A life of recollection, of zeal, of self-immolation, ought to continue our thanksgiving after the divine sacrifice. Determine in what particular point, and in what circumstances you will show God that you do not forget the immense favor He has granted you.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The preparation for the exercise of thanksgiving consists in three acts: Admiration, adoration, love.

I. Retire with Jesus Christ within your heart, suspend all the exercises of your mind, remain in silent admiration. This is the fittest way in which to honor His infinite majesty. It is as if you said to Him: Lord, who is like unto Thee! II. In profound recollection, adore the word of God made flesh. Unite your adoration to that of Mary and the angels. Invite all creatures to adore Him in you and with you. III. The sentiment, however, which should possess your whole heart is the sentiment of love.

Second Point.—The thanksgiving proper should contain also three acts: Thanksgiving, prayer, offering. I. Return thanks in the name of all the inhabitants of heaven. Apostles, martyrs, confessors; and you especially, Queen of all the saints, what do you not owe almighty God? I shall help you to pay your immense debt. Ask. All power has been placed in your hands. II. Pray for all, but particularly for the clergy. Make use of the touching prayer of Jesus Christ after the Last Supper. "My Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son," that He may glorify Thee in me, with me, through me. III. Offer yourself first to Jesus Christ. Receive, O Lord, all my liberty, all that I have, all that I am; but also offer Jesus Christ to His Father. To you He has been given to supply your needs. Offer the sanctity of His life to repair the defilements of yours.

Third Point.—The conclusion of the thanksgiving. Manifest by works, on this very day, the protestations of gratitude and

devotion which you offered to Jesus Christ. A life of recollection, of zeal, of self-immolation, should continue the thanksgiving after Mass.

Monday within the Octave of the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament.

MEDITATION LXXXVIII.

THE HOLY JOYS OF A WELL-MADE COMMUNION.

1.—*A Communion Properly Made Procures Spiritual Joys.*
2.—*Nature of Those Spiritual Joys of the Soul.*

First Point.—Communion procures spiritual joy. Speaking of the manna, which was but a figure of the Eucharist, the Holy Ghost said: "Thou gavest them bread from heaven having in it all that is delicious, and the sweetness of every taste." "This heavenly bread," says St. Cyprian, "contains, as well as the manna, all imaginable flavors; through a marvelous virtue, it enables those who receive it worthily to experience a pleasure unsurpassed in sweetness." (Serm. de cœna Dom.) St. Macarius avers that "the well-disposed soul finds unutterable delights in holy communion; she discovers riches therein which the eye has not seen, the ear has not heard." St. Bonaventure puts the following words on the lips of Jesus Christ: "O soul, hast thou not known by experience that in receiving Me thou wert tasting honey and the comb which contains it, viz., the sweetness of My divinity united to My body and to My blood?" All the works of the Fathers express the same sentiments. As to the Scripture, when speaking of the Eucharist, it gives us to understand by the symbols which it uses how delightful this food is to hearts that are well prepared. Now it is called a delicious wine, again an exquisite food, and bread made of the purest wheat. It represents holy communion under the image of a magnificent feast, such as a king would make when celebrating the wedding of his son. Interpreters apply to the Eucharist the different passages of the Scripture where mention is made of honey, of milk, of wine, of all that is most desirable in matter of food and beverage: *Suavitatem hujus sacramenti*, says St. Thomas, *nullus exprimere sufficit, per quod spiritualis dulcedo in suo fonte gustatur.* (Op. 57.) Those who mortify themselves well understand the following words of St. Jerome: *Hoc solum habemus in praesenti saeculo*

bonum, si vescamur carne Domini. (In cap. 3, Ezech.) Hear the Venerable Berchmans: "O my dear Master, after receiving communion, what is there on earth that can give me peace and contentment?"

Second Point.—What is the nature of these holy joys which the Eucharist procures for our souls? The answer of St. Thomas to this question should quiet those persons who, though preparing worthily for communion, complain that they experience no delight in receiving it. An object, he says, may cause us pleasure, either by itself, or by the image we form of it to ourselves; by itself, when it actually impresses our senses, as when we behold or taste it; by its image, when the mind occupies itself with the advantageous idea it had conceived of the same; the mere thought of that which is good imparts to the soul an agreeable sentiment, especially when we possess or hope to possess it. The avaricious man, for instance, feels pleased whenever he thinks of his treasure, though he keeps it locked up in his coffers without ever seeing or touching it. The Eucharist brings delight to the faithful soul, sometimes in one, sometimes in another of those two manners.

I. Although in communicating I experience no sensible consolation, is it not great comfort for my soul to know that Jesus Christ gives Himself to me, and that in possessing Him I possess the sovereign Good, the source of all blessings? When the Son of God comes to us, said Father Alvarez, He does not leave His spiritual riches, His graces, His favors, in heaven, He comes with His hands full of gifts, His heart filled with love. But if He came empty-handed, would He not suffice for my happiness? Is He not Himself the most precious of all treasures? Do I not know that spiritual favors and consolations are the least fruits of communion; that the good Saviour often deprives His most devoted servants of them, so as to teach them to have more esteem for Him than for His gifts? "A great comfort it is to be satisfied with God, expecting no consolation from Him. Did you know the good that God does you in giving Himself to you, though He leaves you without any sentiment of devotion! If it were in your power, after communicating, to comprehend the words of the Saviour to His apostles after the Last Supper, after giving them communion with His own hand: "Know you what I have done to you?" you would be more pleased than if you enjoyed all the pleasures of earth. Jesus has now given you His body for your food, His blood for your beverage, His soul for your ransom, His divinity for your support, His heaven for your inheritance. He enlightens your mind, increases your love, purifies

your heart, mortifies your senses, weakens the strength of your passions; He communicates to you His virtues, He sanctifies you; what sweetness is there that can compare with that excessive goodness?'' (Father Nouet.) We must confess, with St. Francis de Sales, that he is indeed covetous to whom God is not sufficient.

II. It happens also that holy communion fills the soul with sensible joys when Jesus Christ permits it to taste the sweetness of His grace. Then, says St. Lawrence Justinian, the heart, though ever so hard, is penetrated with the most tender feelings. The soul, fragrant with heavenly perfumes, becomes inflamed with the ardors of divine love, and sings the praises of Him who is all hers. "My Beloved is mine." She gives herself all to Him. She devotes herself to His service, and only waits for the occasion of a sacrifice in order to show her love. For all the satisfactions of this lower world she experiences disgust, looks unconcerned upon the humiliations of life, and remains unmoved by insults, contradictions, all the ingratitude of creatures. Two things produce in her this happy change: the sight and the love of Jesus Christ: the sight of His perfections, the love of His blessings.

It is true that those delights in communion are not granted to all, nor in the same degree to those who receive them; few souls are sufficiently pure, detached from themselves, crucified with Jesus Christ, to know the full sweetness of those chaste delights. As for the spiritual joy caused by the knowledge of the immense blessings contained in this Sacrament, every Christian can experience it. All that is needed for this is to esteem divine grace, to desire salvation, to sigh after the possession of heaven, and to bear in mind that the best way to realize the holy desires is to receive holy communion.

I well understand, O Lord, Thy merciful design in instituting this Sacrament, so well named: *Dulcedo dulcedinum, amor amorum.* Thou wouldst unite Thyself to man, render him like unto Thee, replenish him with delights, and thus bring him to perfect love, wherein consists the holy life of which this heavenly bread is the principle as it is also the pledge of life everlasting. O Jesus, accomplish in Thy ministers this design so worthy of Thy heart, and then make use of our zeal to accomplish it in all Thy disciples; grant that Thy love be the life of all Thy priests. To love Thee, to be loved by Thee, and to have no occupation save to gain hearts to Thee, is indeed a noble and blessed life.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Communion procures spiritual joys. Manna, a figure of the Holy Eucharist, is called, in Scripture, a heavenly bread, containing all that is delicious: *Nullus exprimere sufficit, suavitatum hujus sacramenti, per quod spiritualis dulcedo in suo fonte gustatur.* (St. Thomas.) In this world, says St. Jerome, we have only one real joy and that is to eat the flesh of the Saviour; and there is one thing only which should cause us to grieve, and that is to be deprived of this Sacrament.

Second Point.—Nature of those joys. The Eucharist brings delight to our souls in two ways.

I. If I experience no sensible joy, is it not great comfort to know most certainly that I possess Jesus Christ, and that in possessing Him I possess the source of all blessings? He comes to us with His hands full of gifts and His heart full of love. Do I not know that feelings of sweetness are among the least fruits of communion? There is much comfort in being pleased with God, though we expect no other blessings from Him.

II. Sometimes Jesus Christ is pleased to make us taste the sweetness of the operation by which He produces grace within us, and then the hardest heart is penetrated with the most tender sentiments. Let us permit this good Master to do with us what He wishes; let us abandon ourselves to the affection of His divine heart.

Tuesday within the Octave of Corpus Christi.

MEDITATION LXXXIX.

DISPOSITIONS FOR COMMUNION.

Without speaking of a lively faith, humility, and great purity of heart, which are general dispositions and the more necessary for holy communion, we find two other excellent ones in these words of the spouse in the Canticle of Canticles: "I sat down under His shadow whom I desired, and His fruit was sweet to my palate." (ii. 3.) The sacramental species which hide the splendors of Jesus Christ in this mystery are like the shadow of that tree of life of which the fruit is so sweet. To desire to unite ourselves to the Saviour who Himself desires so ardently to be united to us, and then to become wrapped up in peaceful recollection when we are about to contract or when we have already contracted this union

with Him, are excellent dispositions with which to receive this Bread of angels.

1.—*Ardent Desire of Receiving Communion.*
2.—*Recollection at the Moment of Communion.*

First Point.—Ardent desire. Is it important? What will excite it within us?

I. As a feeling of hunger indicates, ordinarily, that the body is disposed to profit by taking food, so a great desire to receive the Eucharist is an excellent preparation for participating abundantly in its blessed effects. St. Augustine said that: *Panis iste famem hominis interioris requirit.* (Tr. 26, in Joan.) This, St. Jerome expresses happily when commenting on this verse of the eightieth psalm: "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." Will you receive the food of the Lord, and eat the Lord Himself? Hear what He says: "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." Open the mouth of your heart. The measure of graces which you shall receive depends not on Me but on you: *Non est in mea potestate, sed in tua est; si volueris, me totum accipies.* O my soul, deeply consider this word. If thou desirest Jesus Christ, if thou desirest Him only, and with all the ardor of which thou art capable, thou shalt receive Him and all the good He wishes to do you: *Igitur accedat nemo cum nausea, nemo resolutus, omnes accensi, omnes ferventes et excitati. . . . Ne torpeamus tanta digni caritate et honore putati. Nonne videtis quanta promptitudine parvuli papillas capiunt, et quanto impetu labia uberibus infigunt? Accedamus cum tanta nos quoque alacritate ad hanc mensam, et ad ubera poculi spiritalis: quinimo cum longe majori trahamus, tanquam infantes lactentes, spiritus gratiam, et unus sit nobis dolor hac esca privari.* (St. John Chrys.) We are never so well disposed to receive the graces of this Sacrament as when we say to the Saviour: "My soul has desired Thee in the night, yea, and with my spirit within me, in the morning early, I will watch for Thee." (Is. xxvi. 9.) The early Christians called the Eucharist *desiderata,* because it was as the center of all their desires.

II. Two things, principally, excite in us a desire to communicate: reflection and mortification. Desire is that impulse of the soul, whereby, knowing the value of a blessing which it does not possess, it aspires to possess it. We ought, therefore, to reflect on the marvelous fruits of the sacrament of our altars. A soul which really strives to sanctify itself, and knows the virtue of the Sacrament either to destroy sin, or to raise the soul to the most sublime perfection, must be inflamed with an ardent desire to

receive it. Here, however, fasting is to be united to meditation, that is to say, the mortification of the senses with the consideration of the infinite blessings procured through fervent communion. The enjoyment of earthly pleasures lessens the strength of the soul, and makes it less apt to desire heavenly delights. Supernatural joys have few attractions for a heart taken up with purely human gratifications; but deprive this heart of its frivolous amusements, and since it can not live without enjoyment, it will run with all its might in the way which shows the sweetness it will experience at the Eucharistic banquet. The Hebrews had to gird their loins in order to eat the paschal lamb, and with it they had to eat wild bitter lettuce, in order to show us by these types of mortification, how useful it is to prepare for communion by exercises of penance. To him alone who will conquer himself, and repress his evil propensities, did Almighty God promise the manna and its hidden sweetness. "To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna." (Apoc. ii. 17.) The Eucharist is a source of ineffable delight; but for whom? Only for those who have control over themselves. "It shall yield dainties to the kings." (Gen. xlix. 20.)

Second Point.—Be deeply recollected during the moments which immediately precede or follow holy communion. The soul, if ever, must be attentive to what it does when accomplishing an act so divine. Is it not deplorable to know that even then we must force our mind to its greatest possible concentration? St. Thomas distinguishes two sorts of communions among those which are made in the state of grace, and with the absolutely requisite dispositions. The one he calls a communion *habitually* spiritual, the other a communion *actually* spiritual. In the one we eat the Eucharistical bread with the habit of faith, charity, etc., only because the mind is distracted; in the other we perform acts of those virtues, because we apply ourselves wholly to the great action which we perform. The former suffices to increase sanctifying grace, for it is supposed that the distraction is not wilful; but the latter is necessary, as the holy Doctor explains it, in order to taste the sweetness of the Sacrament, and to gather the fruits thereof. Jesus Christ commanded the first when He said: "Take and eat, this is My body;" and He seems to commend the second by adding: "Do this in commemoration of Me," since it amounts to saying: Think of Me, believe, hope in Me, love Me. The second manner of receiving the Eucharist which produces the interior acts which the greatness and goodness of the Son of God should inspire, is the only one really worthy of Him and of ourselves. Of this also the Doctors of the Church speak when they exhort us to adore

Jesus Christ giving Himself to us, to humble ourselves in His presence, to converse with Him, to ask Him to give us the help we need. "When the Saviour enters a well-disposed soul," says St. John Chrysostom, "He pours therein the rays of His light, and fills it with His unction. He solicits it to love, to relish, to embrace Him; and it is chiefly through faithful correspondence with these graces that it becomes intimately united to Him, and that it makes rapid progress in virtue." Let us be extremely careful, in these blessed moments, to put all earthly matters out of our minds, so as to think on Jesus Christ alone. Let us imitate Abraham, who, wishing to offer his sacrifice to God, left all his servants at the foot of the mount, and Moses, likewise, who went up alone to the summit of Sinai, ordering the people to remain below: *Ingemisce et dole, quod adhuc ita carnalis sis . . . . tam immortificatus a passionibus . . . . tam cito distractus, tam raro tibi plene collectus.* (Im. l. iv. ch. 7.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— Ardent desire to communicate. "Will you," says St. Jerome, "eat fruitfully the body of the Lord? Hear what He Himself said: Open the mouth of thy heart." Grace is measured out in proportion to our desires: *Esurientes implevit bonis.* Two things excite in us these holy desires: reflection, which enlightens us regarding the invaluable price of a good communion, and mortification. The enjoyment of earthly pleasures renders a soul less desirous of heavenly joys. To be able to relish this hidden manna, one must conquer himself.

Second Point.— Become deeply recollected before, during, and after communion. Then it is, if ever, that a soul ought to be attentive to what is passing within her, and to what she is doing. Let us be guided by faith; adore Jesus Christ giving Himself to us; humble ourselves in His presence; entrust to Him our miseries; ask of Him the help we need, set no bounds to our confidence. In this consists that spiritual reception which we should join to the sacramental reception of the Sacrament.

Wednesday within the Octave.

MEDITATION XC.

VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

1.—*The Good Priest Visits Jesus Christ in His Sanctuary.*
2.—*Manner of Making the Visits.*

First Point.—The good priest loves to visit Jesus Christ in His sanctuary. Is there an occupation more proper, more sweet, more useful?

I. Supposing that a monarch, with no other view than that of honoring, protecting, and showing me his affection, has fixed his abode in the place where I live, that I may go into his presence as often as I like. Will this impose no obligation upon me? What might be said of my conduct if I neglected him? Jesus Christ has done for us that which no king ever did for the most beloved among his subjects. What was His intention in fixing His dwelling-place among men? Had He intended only to be their Victim on the altar, and the food of their souls at the holy table, it would have sufficed for Him to be present under the sacred species, during the Mass and at the time of communion only. In abiding near us continuously He wished to be always within our reach, and to render us at every moment all the offices of the kindest friendship. Shall we leave Him alone in our churches? Will not His priests go often to adore Him and to receive His blessings? Though He passed among the Jews, doing good and multiplying miracles, they never knew or loved Him. Let us confess that indifference toward Him in His Sacrament would denote on our part a blindness not less offensive to His adorable heart. O Priest! go and visit Him, both in your own name and in the name of those souls whose care He has Himself entrusted to you. Is there an occupation more reasonable, more proper than this? Is there any other which you should like as well?

II. A good son loves to visit and converse with his father, and the greatest joy of a friend is to be in the society of a faithful friend. How grateful we should feel to have Our Saviour so near us in the place of our exile! to be permitted to make Him the Confident of our sorrows. The Scripture considers that a singular favor was granted to the patriarch Joseph when wisdom went down with him into his prison and that it did not abandon him in his

chains. But the Word made flesh, the incarnate Wisdom dwells with us in the prison of this life of sorrows, and abideth with us during all the time of our captivity. The good priest does not seek consolations elsewhere; a visit to the Blessed Sacrament cures him of his fatigue, removes his sadness, reanimates his hopes. Does he not often enter his church with heart filled with grief and come out of it filled with joy and courage? Oh, that my habitual disposition may be that of David when he exclaimed: "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord God of hosts; my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord." (Ps. lxxxiii.)

III. To the motive of attraction we should add the motive of immense interest. Never does one, led by his faith, go to visit the Saviour in His tabernacle without receiving from Him some precious benediction. He does not rest day and night in our sanctuaries with the intention of saying nothing to us or of giving us nothing. His treasures are there, always open, to enrich those who will come to Him. Is He not in the Eucharist what He was during His mortal life, the Friend of sinners, the Consoler of the afflicted, the Saviour of souls? He continues to work out the wonders of power and bounty which He performed in Judea; healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead to life! He longs for His ministers to come and speak to Him of their projects, ask for His counsel, receive from His heart the sacred fire which they must enkindle in the hearts of their brethren.

This devotion has been remarkable in all the priests whom Almighty God made use of for the great works of His mercy. Let us recall to mind St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Anthony of Padua, St Francis Xavier, and many others. The apostle of the Indies often passed whole nights in adoration before the Blessed Eucharist. St. Vincent de Paul never failed to salute the Blessed Sacrament before he went out, and after his return to go and give an account to Jesus Christ of what he had done for His glory. M. Olier said: "The priest who is attentive to honor the Saviour in this mystery, and to beseech Him in behalf of sinners, will sooner or later obtain their conversion. In thus staying before the Holy of holies and praying to Him, he must necessarily participate in the sentiments of Our Lord and in His power for touching, enlightening, and converting peoples. I die of grief upon seeing that Jesus Christ is not honored in the Most Holy Sacrament, neither by the priests nor their people."

Pious cenobites in the fifth century had consecrated themselves as a guard of perpetual honor to the divine King. Divided in different tribes, as the children of Israel of old, they kept in the temple of the Lord a psalmody which was never interrupted.

Let us bless Providence for having raised up in our days religious communities whose vocation is to render perpetual homage to the God of our sanctuaries. This zeal is not locked within cloisters. Fervent laymen give us beautiful examples of it; they are seen in many of our cities adoring the Most Blessed Sacrament, not only during the whole day, but also during all hours of the night. Notwithstanding this devotion, how many reasons have we to deplore indifference and neglect toward this admirable and touching mystery? Let us acknowledge it. "There are thousands of associates to the perpetual adoration, and millions of hearts unconcerned about the presence of the Son of God residing in the midst of us." (P. Berhier, Reflect. II.) [1]

Second Point.—Manner of making those visits. St. Augustine said that his mother visited the church twice every day in order to hear the discourses of the Lord, and that the Lord might hear her prayers. If we listen to Jesus Christ and speak to Him, our visits will be equally consoling and useful.

I. We do not sufficiently hear Jesus Christ, especially immediately after communion and when we go to visit Him. We should, after becoming penetrated with the sentiment of His presence by an act of faith, enter into a spirit of profound recollection. Where am I? Where art Thou, O my God? What art Thou, and what am I? Recollection and attention. "I will hear what the Lord will speak in me." (Ps. lxxxiv. 9.) Let us hear what He inspires, what He expects of us, how He reproaches us, what He approves of. He speaks to us more clearly after communion, but He also speaks to the interior soul in the visits she makes Him, and we have almost infallible evidence that He has spoken when He imparts a desire to love Him, to suffer for Him and to do much for Him. O Jesus, what didst not Thou say to the holy preachers of Thy law, to Thy faithful ministers, when they presented themselves at the foot of Thy altars? Here, in the solitude of Thy sanctuaries, we

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[1] Let us here record two observations of P. de St. Jure. I. It is not always at the moment of the visit, or immediately after, that we gather the fruits; but when, later on, you will overcome a temptation, practice a good work, the grace that you had needed in order to perform that good work, to gain that victory, was given you in consequence of that visit. II. Although in presence of the Blessed Sacrament you perform no interior act because of your extreme aridity; though you do nothing else but present yourself to Jesus Christ, bringing to Him your body, with all the good will of which you are capable, you must not believe that you are losing your time, for this visit will be at least a protestation of your faith, an evidence of your respect, a pledge of your love; for, unless you believed in the real presence, if you had not the intention of honoring the Saviour, if you did not love Him, you would not come and kneel at His feet.

experience in our hearts the truth of Thy promise. I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart. (Osee, ii. 14.)

II. The Saviour wishes also that we speak to Him. Are we not bound to offer Him homage? Have we no request to make? Let us honor His infinite greatness by acknowledging our nothingness before Him; His sovereign dominion by offering Him all we have received of Him; His holiness by sorrow over past sins; His power and goodness by ardent, filial prayers. We have books which contain forms of colloquies with Jesus Christ present in this mystery; but when we are influenced by the spirit of faith, sentiments multiply in our hearts without study, and aspirations pour out of them like sparks flying out of a furnace. "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." (Ps. lxxxiii. 2.) And is there anything at that time which we dare not ask Our Lord Jesus Christ, either for ourselves, our brethren or the Church? With the greatest simplicity we make known our miseries, expose our sorrows, consult Him in our doubts and difficulties. "Jesus teaches in the Eucharist in silence; He converses with him who hears Him, as a friend converses with a friend. Let us revive our faith; let us often present ourselves before the tabernacle of the New Law and we shall soon experience that this exercise is not only one of the most holy, but one of the most sweet, consoling, and interesting devotions of religion."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The good priest loves to visit the Blessed Sacrament. There is no occupation more just, more sweet, more useful. Compare His conduct with that of a monarch, who, to give me evident proofs of his love, would fix his abode near me. If the Saviour had thought of the sacrifice and of communion only, it had sufficed Him to be present under the sacred species at the times when those great acts are accomplished; He has therefore intended something more. And we leave Him alone? The good son loves to see his father. Let us go thither for consolation. "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord, God of hosts!" Our own interests invite us to go and visit the Holy Eucharist.

Second Point.—Manner of making those visits. The good priest adores, hears, and speaks to Our Lord in the Eucharist. He loses himself in profound recollection, then opens the ear of his heart to the inspirations of his adorable Guest. O Jesus, what dost Thou say every day to the souls that remain in silent recollection at the foot of Thy altar? The Saviour wishes us to speak to Him. Are we not bound to adore Him, have we no

request to address to Him? Let us make known to Him our sorrows, consult Him in our doubts and difficulties. Such has always been the conduct of good priests. Recall to mind St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Francis Borgia, St. Francis Xavier, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Vincent de Paul, M. Olier.

MEDITATION XCI.

APPLICATION OF THE SENSES TO THE MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST.[1]

First Prelude.—If I do not perform this exercise in a sanctuary where Our Lord resides, I will place myself in spirit in presence of the Blessed Sacrament solemnly exposed. If I make it after the celebration of Mass, my soul will be the sanctuary into which I shall enter.

Second Prelude. Enlighten me, O Lord, take pity on my blindness. Let Thy Word, the eternal light which came down on earth to enlighten every man coming into the world, dissipate the darkness of my soul, so that I may know Him such as faith shows Him to me in His Sacrament: "May He cause the light of His countenance to shine upon us, and may He have mercy on us." (Ps. lxvi. 1.)

I. Application of the sight. See the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ. Never was there a man of so much exterior beauty. "Beautiful above the sons of men." (Ps. xliv. 3.) The bearing, the mien, the manners, all are divine. In seeing Him in the deserts the multitudes forget to eat. In order to excite yourself to gratitude and love, consider Him in the different situations of His life, but particularly during His Passion, and after His Resurrection. See His head, once crowned with thorns, now crowned with glory! His hands and feet, once pierced with nails, now more resplendent than the stars. Think of His soul; consider His faculties: His memory ever occupied with the interests of God and our own, with the glory of God and the salvation of men. Think of His intellect. "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. ii. 3.) What noble inclinations in His will! what virtue, what charity, what tender compassion for our miseries! We have spoken of His humanity. Consider Jesus Christ as God. The Word, eternally begotten in the

[1] This exercise, of which we gave the method at the beginning of the first volume, p. 18, may be practised with advantage after communion, or in the visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

brightness of the saints, infinitely good, wise, mighty, personally united to human nature. Behold Him who is hid under such mean appearances. Believe it firmly. Behold the Guest who dwells with you. When you have received communion He comes out to lavish His favors on you. Admire, adore, praise, give thanks. *Adoro te devote*, etc.

II. Application of the hearing. Hear the eternal Father saying to you, as to the disciples on Mount Thabor: "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him?" (Luke, ix. 34.) Yes, hear ye Him! Beseech the Holy Ghost to give you grace to understand what He is about to teach you. With Mary Magdalen place yourself at His feet, be attentive to His words, for He habitually teaches us His Gospel in this mystery. How eloquently He instils here contempt of the world, esteem of God alone, abnegation of self, obedience, patience, interior life. Admirable are the secrets which He here reveals to recollected and fervent priests. What tender reproaches He addresses from His tabernacle to those who are lukewarm, unmortified, who squander their time, without pity for souls, without gratitude toward Himself! If you deserve these reproaches, humble yourself and promise to be more faithful; say to Him through your heart that which your lips repeat every day: "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Ps. cxviii. 105.) Thy words, O Lord, shall be the rule of my judgments, the lamp which will guide all my steps. Thy maxims are the only ones which I will follow.

III. Application of the smell. The name Christ, which we join with that of Jesus, creates in us the idea of balsam and perfume. St. Laurence Justinian calls the Holy Eucharist: *Cellarium continens omnium aromatum pretiositatem et virtutem.* The aromatics so often mentioned in the Canticles are the attractions of the virtues of Our Saviour. They act on souls as a powerful charm, to withdraw them from the corruption of the world, to make them seek after Him in the way of His commandments and of His counsels. "Draw me, we will run after Thee to the odor of Thy ointments." (Cant. i. 3.) Imagine God the Father saying to you in the language of Isaac to Jacob: "Behold the smell of My Son is as the smell of a plentiful field." (Gen. xxvii. 27.) The flowers and fruits of that field are an image of the exemplary virtues which Jesus Christ practises in the Holy Sacrament, of His detachment, charity, unalterable meekness; of the state of victim to which He reduces Himself in order to honor His Father, to appease His anger, and to obtain for us all the graces we need. Think of the joy which the most Holy Trinity receives from this perpetual sacrifice, which embalms heaven

and earth. "The Lord smelled a sweet savor." (Gen. viii. 21.) Bear in mind that if the priests, being placed as they are, nearer Jesus Christ, and having more intimate relations with Him than others, breathe in the odor of His virtues more fully than the simple faithful, they are also under stricter obligation to spread it around them; and never forget the recommendation addressed to you on the day of your sacerdotal consecration: *Sit odor vitae vestrae delectamentum Ecclesiae Christi.* (Pont.) Consider, finally, that good example is like incense, which must be consumed by fire before it exhales its perfume; so our virtues draw all their merit before God from the charity which animates them.

IV. Application of the taste. Of all our senses, the taste is the one which applies more naturally to the Holy Eucharist. In this mystery all relates to the taste; the figures which represent it; the names given to it; the symbols under which it is hid; the invitations to receive it addressed to us by Our Lord Jesus Christ. His invitations are invitations to a feast. "Take, eat My body, drink My blood; come, My friends, drink this wine which throws the soul into a state of holy inebriation, procures for it a sweet slumber and delightful repose." In the language of the Church the Eucharist is a heavenly bread which contains all real delights: *Omne delectamentum in se habentem.* But, as in order to derive benefit, our food must be taken somewhat slowly, so the more you meditate upon the condescension, kindness, beauty, and all the qualities of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, the more you will relish the sweetness of this heavenly bread. If your soul be moved and inflamed by those considerations, you will experience a heavenly joy, which will inspire you with contempt for all earthly carnal joys: *Gustato spiritu,* says St. Bernard, *necesse est carnem despicere.* You shall then say with holy Job: "Can an unsavory thing be eaten that is not seasoned with salt? or can a man take that which, when tasted, bringeth death?" (Job, vi. 6.)

Offer to Our Lord the following beautiful prayer of St. Augustine: *Obsecro Domine Jesu, omnia mihi amarescant, et tu solus dulcis appareas, quia tu es dulcedo inaestimabilis, per quam omnia dulcorantur.*

V. Application of the touch. As soon as fire touches wood it heats it and consumes it; there are herbs, balms, medicines, which heal wounds. Do you seek a remedy to cure the infirmities of your soul? Apply to it the body and the blood of Jesus Christ. During His mortal life a secret virtue came out of Him and healed all the sick. (Luke, vi. 19.) The same must also be said of the Holy Eucharist. Let us hear St. John Chrysostom speaking of communion in connection with the history of the woman who

had an issue of blood: "Let us also touch this fringe of the garment of Jesus, or rather let us touch Himself. Let us approach Him with a lively faith and a firm hope, for if those who touched His robe were perfectly cured how can we fail to be healed when we possess Himself?" Unite your senses to the senses of your Saviour, unite your soul to His soul. Unite your intellect to His, that you may be healed of your blindness; unite your will to His will, that henceforth you may, with Him, will nothing else but what God wills; unite all your being to His divinity, by faith, confidence, and love. Therein you shall find your abode, the place of your repose, and a foretaste of heavenly delights.

And now, form, as it were, a spiritual bouquet of all the resolutions you have taken in honor of the Most Blessed Sacrament. How great the joy or the terror which this mystery will cause us when we appear before the tribunal of God! Let us address to Our Lord the following touching prayer of St. Anselm: *En igitur, misericordissime Jesu, fateor immensae bonitati tuae me esse nimis audacem peccatorem, ac plurima quae tibi displicent quotidie facientem, et tamen altaris tui servitium quotidie facere praesumentem, non enim possum de tua misericordia desperare. . . . Fateor, ah! fateor, peccator sum, immundus sum, indignus sum; et tamen non recedo a te, dulcissime Jesu! non dimitto te; sed quotidie, etsi infirma et trepida manu, tenebo te. Non recedas a me, donec ab omni contagione peccati absolvas me; et sic corporis et sanguinis tui mysteria participantem, tuaeque voluntati jugiter inhaerentem, et praecepta tua assidue facientem me perducas ad veram salutem, videlicet ad te verum sacerdotem; ubi cum beatis sacerdotibus tuis ego quoque, tunc non amplius peccator, sed dignus sacerdos et minister tuus, te glorificabo per aeterna saecula. Amen.* (Scut. Fid. t. vi., p. 245.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

I. Application of the sight. Behold the holy humanity of Jesus Christ. You have it here in its state of glory, beauty of the body, beauty of the soul. Behold the divinity! What majesty, what greatness, what power hid under so common appearances!

II. Application of the hearing. Hear the eternal Father saying to you: "This is My well-beloved Son, hear ye Him!" How eloquently He preaches contempt of the world, esteem of God alone, self abnegation, obedience in this mystery! How admirable the secrets He herein discovers to pure souls.

III. Application of the smell. The name Christ, which we unite to that of Jesus, creates in us the idea of balm and perfume; what fragrance it spreads, what wonderful charm it imparts to souls,

in the meekness, patience, charity of the Son of God. Can any person who communicates often and worthily fail to spread around the good odor of Jesus Christ?

IV. Application of the taste. Everything in this mystery relates to this sense. The Eucharist is a heavenly bread which contains all delights. When we partake of it worthily we soon experience disgust for all earthly joys.

V. Application of the touch. As soon as fire comes in contact with wood it kindles it; in like manner does the Eucharist act on a soul that receives it holily. If sick persons, by touching the Saviour's garments, were perfectly cured, can we fail to recover health when we possess the Saviour Himself within us?

Feast of the Sacred Heart.

MEDITATION XCII.

THE HEART OF JESUS CHRIST SPEAKING TO THE HEARTS OF PRIESTS.

1.—*Complaints of the Sacred Heart.*
2.—*Requests of the Sacred Heart.*
3.—*Promises of the Sacred Heart.*

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself the Saviour appearing to each of His ministers as He did to the Blessed Margaret Mary, and saying these words to her: "Behold the heart which has loved men so much, and which is loved by them so little. But that which is most painful to Me is, that I find ungrateful souls among the very persons who are consecrated to Me. Thou canst not show Me greater love than by doing what I have asked of you so often. I promise you that My heart will expand in order to pour down abundant benedictions on those who will honor it, and apply their zeal to make it be honored by others."

Second Prelude.—Ask for grace to understand well the desires of the heart of Jesus, and to conform yourself to them.

First Point.—Complaints of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He addresses them to all His ministers.

I. "Behold this heart." Jesus presents it to us; it is His heart. It is the masterpiece of the Holy Ghost. "In Him dwelleth the plenitude of the divinity corporally." (Col. ii. 9.) It is the organ of the most noble, the most pure, the most sublime affections. It is the heart of the best of masters, of the most tender of fathers,

of the most sincere of all friends. Was it not in its goodness patient toward the apostles, consoling to the widow of Näim, to the sisters of Lazarus? He is always the same, always ready to feel compassion for those who suffer. O my soul, how well it understands thy miserable state; how full of compassion for so many unfortunates who lose their souls notwithstanding its ardent desire to save them!

II. "Which has loved men so much." Notice the words "so much." He has undoubtedly loved men, He the Saviour of all men, since He died for all, since there is not one that can not say: "He loved me and gave Himself up for me." (Gal. ii. 20.) But how much did He love them? Who will understand it, who will declare it? He Himself seems unable to express it. Recall to mind some of His principal blessings! Remember the stable, the cross, the altar! Yes, remember the altar, the mystery of the Eucharist which you have been considering for eight days, and which shall be the object of the eternal admiration of angels and saints; a God descending from the brightness of His glory to the miserable condition of our humanity, condemning Himself to humiliation and debasement in order to lift us up to His throne; devoting Himself to all kinds of suffering in order to deserve for us sovereign happiness; a God founding the Church that He might abide constantly with us, willing that His flesh should be our food, His blood our drink! Is He not a God who loves infinitely and possesses a claim to infinite love? *O cor infinite amans et infinite amandum!* But if Jesus has loved men so much, tell us, O Priest, what rank you occupy among those whom He has most loved? What are your duties in that Church wherein He dwells, wherein He immolates and gives Himself? What is your share in the favors which He lavishes upon His dearest friends? "Eat, O friends, and drink and be inebriated, My dearly beloved." (Cant. v. 1.) And now tell us what is the gratitude of men and that of your own self? For a love so great, what does the heart of Jesus receive in return?

III. "And who is so little loved by them." These are distressing words. Let us think no longer of that which ought to be, but that which really is. How great the number of souls that have no knowledge of the generous charity of the heart of Jesus for them! How many others who know this Sacred Heart, but are not, on that account, any more faithful to return it love for love! Jesus complains, He looks for consolers. "I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort Me and I found none." But is this true of priests, of those whom He distinguished from the rest by bestowing upon them an affection incomparably more tender? Hear, O Priests, the words

that follow, and let them penetrate your hearts like sharp, pointed arrows.

IV. "But that which is most painful to Me is, that they who treat Me thus are hearts which are consecrated to Me." Is there a heart so consecrated to Jesus Christ as the heart of the priest? Who will love Him if the priest does not? There are, however, many priests who give just occasion to those sorrowful complaints. Not to speak of those who war against Him by profanation and scandal, how many treat Him without respect, without love! They grow weary in His presence: their tepidity accompanies them to the altar; they have no time to converse with Him after the celebration of Mass. O Jesus, I will acknowledge it to my shame, these reproaches I fully deserve, and a thousand times more. I humbly and truly confess it. I am one of those ungrateful beings of whom Thou didst say: "Others strike My body only, but these wound My heart, which never ceased to love them."

Second Point.—Requests of the heart of Jesus. "Thou canst not show Me greater love than by doing what I have so often asked of thee." (Words of Our Lord to Blessed Margaret Mary.) Behold the sovereign God addressing a request. He might command as a master; He does not do so. He prays earnestly, not satisfied with one expression of His desire: what does He ask? He desires in general that His heart be compensated for the outrages it receives, be glorified through our love. "Our Lord Jesus Christ made me know that the great desire He has to be perfectly loved by men had required Him to manifest His heart to them, and to give them in these latter days this new pledge of His bounty, by offering to them an object so proper to touch them. He declared to me that He was singularly pleased in seeing His interior sentiments honored under the symbol of this heart of flesh, such as it was shown to me, and that it was His will to have it exposed publicly, in order to touch the hard hearts of men." He indicated some special acts of homage which He desired should be offered Him. The institution of a festival, fervent communions, acts of reparation. He made known His intention to a humble nun, yet quite capable to bring about the realization of this design. "The weak things of the world has God chosen." But what does He ask now? What has He been asking of us, His priests, who are called upon by our vocation to realize the projects of His mercy? Do we practise, do we propagate this sweet devotion as much as He desires? Did He not inspire us many times to do more than we do for the glory of His Sacred Heart? Have you not felt that you ought to consecrate either your whole parish or some of its better disposed souls to the Sacred Heart, or that you should have re-

course to it with greater confidence, speak of this devotion more fervently and with greater zeal; in the confessional, when attending the sick? Ah, on this day at least, if we hear the voice of this adorable heart, let us not harden our own! Let us give it this comfort on the recurrence of the festival particularly consecrated to the reparation of past indifference and profanations. Jesus Christ will not let devotion to His heart go without reward.

Third Point.—The promises of the heart of Jesus. Some of these are common to the laity and to us, others relate to the ministries which we exercise for the salvation of souls. "I promise thee that My heart shall dilate to pour down with abundance the influence of its love on any one who will honor it, and will exercise his zeal for its honor." These words concern all those who glorify the Sacred Heart and contribute as much as they can to its glory. She continues: "If you be in an abyss of weakness, of relapses and miseries, know that the heart of Jesus is an abyss of mercy and strength. If you discover within you excessive pride, unite yourself to the humiliations of the heart of Jesus. I know not of another exercise in the school of spiritual life so proper to elevate a soul to the highest perfection in a short time."

But here are words particularly encouraging for us: "My Saviour gave me to understand that they who labor for the salvation of souls shall have grace to touch the most hardened hearts, and that their labors shall be blest with admirable success, if they are themselves penetrated with sincere devotion toward this blessed heart." What more can the good priest desire? You desire, while saving yourself, to save other souls, and many of them; you desire to arouse consciences most deeply rooted in evil. You know the way to success. Jesus Himself deigned to teach it to you.

O Sacred Heart, I adore thee in the august Sacrament, which recalls to our minds all the wonders of thy goodness toward men. Admirable heart, how little loved and known thou art by the very persons whose glorious mission is to bring all hearts to thee! Thou shalt forever be my refuge in sorrows and difficulties, my hope and my strength in those moments of trouble and anxiety in which my soul feels ready to succumb under the weight of sadness. Through thee I will escape the dangers which threaten my salvation, and contribute efficaciously to the salvation of my brethren. Heart of Jesus, thou wert the heart of St. Paul, of St. Francis Xavier, of all apostolic men. Be thou mine also! Instil into me thy humility, thy meekness, thy zeal, all thy virtues. I again consecrate myself to thee; to thee I dedicate my labors, my sorrows, my joys, my life and the end of my life. And now I turn to Thee, O most Holy Trinity! After blessing Thee for having given me the

heart of Jesus, allow me to offer it to Thee. Vouchsafe, I beseech Thee, to accept the reparation it offers Thee for all the evil I have done, for all the good that I have left undone.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— Complaints of the heart of Jesus. "Behold this heart." Study how noble it is and how excellent. "Which has loved men so much." Take heed to the words "so much"; recall the principal benefits which give evidence of this love. "And which is so little loved by them." A sad reality! From the greater part Jesus receives only neglect and ingratitude. He looks for consolers; He finds none. "But that which is most painful to Me is, that they who thus act toward Me are hearts which are consecrated to Me!" O Jesus, is there any heart so entirely consecrated to Thee as the heart of a priest?

Second Point.—Requests of the heart of Jesus. The Sovereign Lord asks. He might command. He prays, He solicits our love, our reparations, our zeal to make Him known and loved. To a humble religious He revealed His desire for the inauguration of a devotion which was to win for Him so many hearts; but does He not address some request to me, His priest?

Third Point.—Promises of the heart of Jesus. "My heart will expand and pour down with abundance the influence of its love on any one who will honor it and aim at obtaining honor and respect for it." "They who labor for the salvation of souls will have grace to touch the most hardened hearts." We see promises for ourselves, promises for the success of our labors. She added: "I know not of another exercise of piety so proper as this to raise souls to a very high perfection in a short time." Let us love this heart which loved us so much, and induce others to love it also.

Third Sunday after Pentecost.

"This man receiveth sinners."

MEDITATION XCIII.

THREE STRIKING EFFECTS OF THE MERCY OF GOD TOWARD SINNERS.

(Vol. I, p. 271.)

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

"From henceforth thou shalt catch men."

MEDITATION XCIV.

THE PRIEST A FISHER OF MEN.

(Vol. I, p. 551.)

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.

MEDITATION XCV.

"EXCEPT YOUR JUSTICE ABOUND MORE THAN THAT OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, YOU SHALL NOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." (Matt. v. 20.)

1.—*God Expects that His Priests shall Abound in Justice.*
2.—*When do They Deserve the Reproaches Bestowed on the Scribes and Pharisees?*

First Point.—God expects that His priests shall abound in justice. To be convinced of this it suffices to remember three comparisons used by Our Saviour when teaching His ministers the obligations which He imposed on them. You are the salt of the earth; the light of the world; a city built upon a mountain. (Matt. v. 13, 14.) The Saviour, says Cornelius à Lapide, had just made known the eight beatitudes, which are an abridgment of evangelical perfection; He applies them to the apostles and to their successors in office personally. The first thing He requires of them is to be the salt of the earth. It is as if He had said: *Vos, O apostoli, quos eligo, ut meo exemplo sitis pauperes spiritu, mites, mundo corde, misericordes . . . hoc ipso eritis sal terrae?* I have chosen that you may go and remedy the universal corruption. How great the purity and sanctity which you need! You will be the salt of the earth if you speak like oracles, if you live like gods. *Sacerdotes ergo sint sal terrae, ut eam praestent morum integritatem, quae caeterorum sit censura et disciplina; quod efficient, si loquantur ut oracula, vivant ut numina.* (Comm. in hoc loc.) The light of the world. The priest is in the Church, the spiritual world, what the sun is in

the physical world: *Sicut ergo sol illuminat cloacas putidas sed ab iis non sordidatur. . . . Ita et tu, O sacerdos, doceas hominem carnalem, et eum emundes, sed ab eo nullam labem contrahas. Sol est in coelo, sed inde radios spargit in terram, quibus eam illustrat; ita et tu mente sis in caelis, corpore in terra, ut eam tuo sermone et exemplo virtutis illumines, calefacias et accendas.* (Ib.) The city placed on a mountain, which cannot be hid, teaches the priest that all eyes are fixed on him, that he is a public man, that he belongs to all, that he is destined to attain the highest perfection. The prophet had said it long ago: "Get thee up upon a high mountain, thou that bringest good tidings to Sion: lift up thy voice with strength, thou that bringest good tidings to Jerusalem." (Is. xl. 9.) O my God, had I often meditated on those words, I should have better understood that sacerdotal zeal ought to raise me above nature, that it demands of me to speak with energy, that it being my duty to guide souls in the way of perfection, nay, of great perfection, I am obliged to walk in that way before them.

Priests should, therefore, possess abundant justice. They continue the work of Jesus Christ, they represent Him, they are His vicars; hence St. Bernard says to them: *Nonne ea via qua Christus ambulavit, et vos debetis ambulare? Nonne sicut conversatus est, et vos vicarii ejus debetis conversari?* Hear St. Bonaventure: *Vicarius Christi vicem Christi debet gerere, in beneplaciti ejus promotione, in potestatis ejus auctoritate, et in similitudinis ejus repraesentatione.* But what is to be said of those negligent priests who, while representing Him by the elevation of their dignity, but work against Him by their lukewarm life; who retain the authority and power received from His hands, and reject that which is equally essential, viz., sanctity? Do they not insult Him cruelly by attempting to divide that which of itself is indivisible?

If you will know the nature of the resplendent virtue which the priest is bound to possess, hear St. Gregory Nazianzen: *Haec summa est ut virtute tales existant ut, uno verbo dicam, coelestes sint: ac possint purgari primum, deinde purgare; sapientia instrui, atque alios sapientes reddere; lumen fieri, et alios collustrare; accedere ad Deum et alios adducere; sanctificari, et aliis sanctificationem afferre.* (In distichon.)

Second Point.—How priests deserve the reproaches bestowed upon the Scribes and Pharisees. In the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew, where Jesus Christ directly opposes those false doctors whose conduct was a source of scandal to the people. He blames them first of all for showing the way of salvation to others and not entering it themselves. "They say and do not." Do not publish the law of God if you refuse to fulfil it, or observe it if you preach it.

To say and not to do is to contradict one's self; it is to build with one hand and destroy with the other, causing the law to be despised by drawing contempt on him who proclaims it. This vice was common in the synagogue. Is it not often found in the Church?

The Scribes and the Pharisees were, moreover, hard toward others, and had no indulgence save for themselves. "They bind heavy and insupportable burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders; but with a finger of their own they will not move them." There is nothing more opposed to Christian charity and to the spirit of the Saviour, who has taken on Himself our infirmities, borne our sorrows, and ever showed Himself full of thoughtfulness and compassion for sinners. It was, however, the pride and hypocrisy of those wicked men which kindled the indignation of the Son of God. "All their works they do to be seen of men, for they make their phylacteries broad, and enlarge their fringes; and they love the first places at feasts, and the first chairs in synagogues, and salutations in the market-place." How many priests, alas, stray from the path of duty through a desire to gain the esteem of the world! St. Thomas said, after St. Jerome: *Tolle inanem gloriam de clero, et sine labore omnia vitia resecabis.* (Exp. in h. l.) O Priest, be afraid of vainglory, which destroys purity of intention, and leaves no room for God in the heart. If you are so happy as to be free from that hypocrisy denounced as many as seven times in the course of the same sermon by Our Saviour, which conceals the most shameful crimes under specious appearances, and makes a whitened sepulcher of a would-be saint, can they say that you are entirely free from another sort of hypocrisy? We speak of those pharisaical dissimulations which keep stricter guard on words than on thoughts, have more regard for the eyes of men than for the eyes of God, and conceal culpable imperfections and negligences under a faultless exterior.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— God expects that the justice of His priests will be abundant. The priest is the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a city built upon a mountain. God chose him that he might remedy universal corruption. Should he not have great purity? The priest is in the Church what the sun is in the physical world. He ought to enlighten, to warm up souls and to make them fruitful. He should strive to prevent scandals by the light of his examples. But he, moreover, continues Jesus Christ's work on earth and continues to represent Him. This caused St. Bernard to say: *Nonne ea via qua Christus ambulavit, et vos debetis ambulare?*

Second Point.—How priests may deserve the reproaches bestowed on the Scribes and Pharisees. By pointing out the way of salvation to others, without entering it themselves.

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

MEDITATION XCVI.

MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES.

(Vol. II, p. 151.)

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

"He that doeth the will of My Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

MEDITATION XCVII.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

(Vol. I, p. 683.)

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

MEDITATION XCVIII.

THE UNJUST BUT WISE STEWARD—PREPARATION FOR GOD'S JUDGMENT.

1.—*Necessity of this Preparation.*
2.—*How to Prepare for It.*

First Point.—Prudence demands that I should be prepared for the judgment of God. This parable is applicable to all men, since they all are, not owners but mere administrators of the blessings they receive in the order of nature and in the order of grace; but it applies moreover and more especially to priests and pastors, who have been chosen by the sovereign Master to dispense His richest treasures. "Dispensers of the mysteries of God." *Villicus eum significat cujus officium est in custodia et regimine Ecclesiae.* (St.

Ans. hom. 12.) Priests are pre-eminently the stewards of God. The more grave and important the interests committed to my care, the more dreadful the account I shall have to give of my administration. Life, health, peerless dignity, immense power, the merits and blood of Jesus Christ: such are, O my God, the talents Thou willest me to dispose of; to procure Thy glory, reconcile men with Thee, struggle against hell, and save souls, are the affairs Thou hast confided to my management. Alas! dost Thou find in me a faithful steward? Does not the bad use I have made hitherto of Thy gifts accuse me and cry out against me? "He was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods."

The steward is summoned to appear before his master. "And he called him." I am liable at any moment to be summoned before my Judge. Am I prepared to meet the accusations He might bring against me?

"How is it that I hear this of thee? I hear nothing but murmurs and accusations; it is a universal cry; from every part they appeal to My justice against thy abuse of My favors. The instruction of thy people, visits to the sick, the care of the poor, thy most essential duties, are neglected, My mysteries are treated without respect. Everything accuses thee of being a steward unfaithful to his trust." I acknowledge it, O my God, with extreme confusion; I have given Thy justice many reasons of complaint; at all the stages of my life, in all the places where I have lived, in all the positions which I have occupied, in all the functions or ministries which I fulfilled, I grieved the hearts of my superiors, of my inferiors, of all those with whom I came in contac , by my actions, my omissions, my words, my examples. The heavens and the earth condemn me. Thy mercy, O my God, is my only hope. That mercy I now implore; have pity on me. *Ante diem rationis donum fac remissionis.* To-day I may still appease Thy anger. Will it be in my power to do so to-morrow?

The steward is ordered to give in his accounts, and is deprived of his office. "Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer." What a thunderbolt for a man who thought himself safe in his iniquity, wasting a property which was not his! He now acknowledges that he has a master whose sacred right he has betrayed, who will now judge him according to the rigor of the law. He will be deprived of everything: of his office, of all employment, of every means by which he may repair his faults. What shall be left to me at the moment of death? For me all means of salvation shall have disappeared. O my soul, meditate on those words of the holy Job, regarding God's judgments:

"What shall I do when God shall rise to judge; and when He shall examine, what shall I answer Him?" (Job, xxxi. 14.) And these others of St. Paul: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. x. 31.) Be ready! thou knowest what eternity awaits thee according to the sentence, either favorable or unfavorable, pronounced against thee or in thy favor. There are many of my brother priests summoned to appear before God when they least expect it! Will it do to regulate my accounts when the moment to render them shall have come?

Second Point.—How shall I prepare for God's judgment? This I shall learn from the steward, unjust though he was. What does he do? He begins by thinking seriously on his position. Such is the beginning of every serious conversion. He speaks to himself: "What shall I do since my master takes away from me my stewardship? To dig I am not able, to beg I am ashamed." How true it is that pride and love of comfort are great obstacles to conversion. Penance, however, in order to be complete, should affect the body and the mind. The body should be made to suffer, and the spirit ought to be humbled; but pride and immortification prevent us from such a resolve. *Perfectio poenitentiae consistit in afflictione et labore corporali, et in humilitate et pudore mentali; et haec duo recusat animus infirmi hominis.* (St. Bonav. Exp. in Hom. 1.) Happily for us God is full of mercy, and in His infinite goodness He opens another way of salvation.

In another instruction Our Lord had required two things as a preparation for judgment, viz.: Passions subdued, and saintly actions. "Let your loins be girded, and have burning lamps in your hands." (Luke, xii. 35.) But in this place He mentions only almsgiving, judging it so proper to touch the heart of God that it will obtain for us all dispositions necessary to reconcile us with God, and restore to us our rights to the heavenly inheritance. We find in the Scripture that everything is promised to the giving of alms. It delivers us from sin and death, it will not suffer us to fall into eternal darkness. (Tob. iv. 11.) "Water quenches flaming fire, and alms resisteth sin." (Ecclus. iii. 33.) It procures the greatest blessings: the mercy of God in this life, endless happiness in the next. (Tob. xii. 9.) O priests, who so justly dread the judgment of God, do you give alms? Give always, give as abundantly as you can. Enlighten, exhort, console others. Let them give to the soul and to the body. Offer some drops of the blood of Jesus Christ for the relief of the suffering souls of purgatory; give peace to the unfortunate souls tormented by remorse, spending their life in pursuit of shadows; restore them to the friendship of God. What charity this would be! Nor must you forget corporal

charity. Be full of compassion for all kinds of miseries. Follow the counsel of St. Ambrose—do what you can, and sometimes a little more. *Compatiamur alienis infirmitatibus; necessitates aliorum quantum possumus juvemus, et plus interdum quam possumus.* (De off. min. 1. ii. c. 28.) Almsgiving, says St. Augustine, is the consolation of our faith, the support of our hope, the remedy of sin; through it we obtain the affection of our Judge, it makes God our debtor. The power of almsgiving! They whose evils we have alleviated shall usher us into the eternal tabernacles.

How welcome, O my God, is the light which this consoling word brings to my soul! I know what I will do to conciliate Thy justice; I shall prepare for myself intercessors and friends, who will speak to Thee in my favor. The multitude of my infidelities and of my crimes I will expiate by works of zeal and of charity. Since Thou wilt soon come down on the altar and visit Thy unworthy servant, give him, I beseech Thee, a heart more and more compassionate toward his fellow beings. Show him all the miseries of the poor and of the indigent in the spiritual and temporal order, so that, in the evil day, when to others Thou shalt be an inexorable Judge, he may find in Thee his almighty Deliverer. "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor; the Lord will deliver him in the evil day." (Ps. xl. 1.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— Prudence requires preparation for the judgment of God. The unjust steward is accused of having wasted his master's goods. Our most formidable accuser at the tribunal of God will be the Gospel, the graces we have received, and our own conscience. Priests are pre-eminently the stewards of God, dispensers of His mysteries. How important are the duties He has intrusted to me! At any moment I may be summoned to appear before His tribunal. I have given countless reasons of complaint. O Jesus, the heavens and the earth condemn me! Thy mercy is my only hope.

The steward is deprived of his office. At death every means of salvation will be taken away from me. O my soul, be ready! Thou knowest which of the two eternities await thee according to the sentence that will be pronounced by the Judge.

Second Point.— How must I prepare for judgment? This I can learn from the steward. He reflects deeply; such is the beginning of every serious conversion. "To dig I am not able, and to beg I am ashamed." Pride and love of an easy life: behold the great obstacles to true penance. He has recourse to almsgiving,

which delivers from sin and from death. If you fear the judgment of God, do some act of charity. Bestow a thought on those who suffer in body and in mind. The influence of charity is amazing; it makes even God our debtor.

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

MEDITATION XCIX.

THE TEARS OF JESUS CHRIST.

(Vol. II, p. 170.)

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

MEDITATION C.

PRIDE.

1.—*Particular Characteristics of this Vice.*
2.—*Its Inconsistency and Folly.*

First Point.—Particular characteristics of pride. Its affectation; its false humility.

I. The affectation of pride. Christ gives it this peculiar characteristic in this day's Gospel. While the humble publican stands afar off, daring not to lift up his eyes, the Pharisee goes nigh to the altar and there you see him standing. "The Pharisee standing." From his bearing, the manner of his prayer, all know him to be one who admires himself, and desires to be admired by others. Study his conduct. You will discover that in his appearance, his movements, his dress, in everything and everywhere, this man desires to attract the attention of others, to obtain the good will of all.

It is in order to heal us of or to preserve us from this vice that Thou commandest us, O my Saviour, not to seek the eyes of men in the good which we perform; to pray in secret, not to sound the trumpet when we give alms, not to seek notoriety when we fast and do penance. For this end it is that Thou recommendest us always to sit in the lower place, to consider ourselves as the least of men. Oh, blessed maxims, wise lessons! They are given me by a God, as it were, annihilated; has He not a right to require that I should

model my whole life according to His? Have I so acted? Thy priests, O Lord, teach the necessity of humility; are they always models of this virtue? Two men go up to the temple; one of them is, by virtue of his office, bound to give good example, and he gives scandal; the other, though a sinner, gives edification by his modesty. O Jesus, for many of Thy ministers, the very temple wherein they distribute Thy graces becomes a tribunal, at which they are condemned by the example of the faithful over whom they have been appointed judges.

II. If pride loves display it also at times seeks concealment. On the one hand, the proud wish to shine, to be above others, to be admired; on the other, they know that if their desire becomes apparent, they will make themselves ridiculous, contemptible; they, therefore, dissimulate their ambition, and affect to act through a sense of duty rather than through a desire for applause. Their endeavors, however, are vain. If people appear to ignore such a man, his pride will soon manifest itself by some outburst, or by sadness. When one so fears to pass for a proud man, it is an evidence that he is one himself.

III. The garb of humility itself is sometimes used to disguise pride. The Pharisee thanks God. "I return Thee thanks;" he, therefore, acknowledges God's greatness, His sovereign dominion; he seems to lower himself in His presence. But why does he return thanks to Him? Because he is not as the rest of men, because he is free from their vices, because he possesses virtues which they do not. Behold pride showing itself in the very act, and through the very act, of adoration and dependence. There is no mistaking it. If you will find out a proud man, force him to confess the inferiority of which he wears the garb; treat him in the manner which he says he deserves; reduce him to the lower rank. His wounded self-love will soon give more than one evidence of its presence. This vice can be destroyed but not concealed. O my God, do Thou pluck it from my heart. I have so many reasons to detest it. It is so culpable and baneful, so contrary to the dignity of Thy ministers, and to the spirit which should animate them.

Second Point.—Inconsistency and folly of pride. Let us consider the Pharisee and the publican going out of the temple. Which of the two deserves our esteem? What has one gained by his pompous prayer; what has the other gained by humbling himself? Many desire esteem and notoriety, hoping to obtain them by exhibiting their importance. Whoever praises himself, save in matters really deserving, loses at once, in the minds of those who hear him, the good opinion they had of him. The moment he shows a desire to occupy the first place they give him the very last

one. There is but one way to real glory, and that is to fly from it. "He who humbleth himself shall be exalted;" and the way to incur contempt is to seek after glory. "He who exalteth himself shall be humbled." Blind as the world is, it only esteems the merit which despises its approbation. We say, therefore, that pride is not only a crime but a folly. It is as opposed to reason as lying is to truth, night to daylight. What of a dwarf who would think himself a giant, because he sees himself on the top of a mountain; who would fancy himself taller than it because it is under his feet? Such is, says St. John Chrysostom, the folly of the proud man; he swells up at the thought that he is superior to others, that all other men are his inferiors. There is, however, this difference, says the same Doctor. The dwarf's folly, being due solely to derangement, excites us to compassion, but the folly of the second, being deliberate, excites naught but the indignation of God and men. "Pride is hateful before God and men." (Ecclus. x. 7.)

Hence it is that we find so many maledictions pronounced against this detestable vice in the Scriptures. As it attempts more directly than any other vice to deprive God of the glory which belongs to Him alone, and which He will concede to no other, it necessarily provokes more dreadful punishments against him who is a slave to it. "The Lord . . . will repay them abundantly that act proudly." (Ps. xxx. 24.) Abundance of chastisements shall repay abundance of sins; do they not all spring from pride? "He that holdeth pride shall be filled with maledictions." (Ecclus. x. 15.) But the special malediction attached to this vice is shame and opprobrium. "Where pride is, there also shall be reproach." (Prov. xi. 2.) Woe to pride! "God hath scattered the bones of them that please men; they have been confounded because God has despised them." He casts them down at the very moment that they were rising. "When they were lifted up, Thou hast cast them down." (Ps. lxvii. 18.) Their elevation becomes their ruin: *Elevatio ipsi ruina est.* (St. Aug. in h. 1.) Hence, in the language of God, that which the world calls height of glory is an abyss of folly: "Till a pit be dug for the wicked." (Ps. xciii. 13.) What, then, is the Lord doing when He permits this man to succeed, at least apparently, according to his desires? He permits him to dig his own grave: *Hoc se ille putat sublimiter ire et hoc Deus foveam vocat.* (St. Aug.) St. Gregory of Nyssa gives the definition of pride, as *Ad inferiora descensus;* and he says elsewhere: *Qui recedit a Deo, in profundum it.* What a degradation in a Christian, and much more in a priest, when he so far forgets his dignity as to go begging the approbation of worldlings! Proud men will

be punished in that very thing by which they sinned; the more they desire honors the more deeply will they be confounded. The oracle sees its accomplishment even in this world. "He that exalteth himself shall be humbled." Think of them at the General Judgment, and during all eternity? Let them hear what the Lord says to them: "I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame which shall never be forgotten." (Jer. xxiii. 40.)

O God, since Thou justifiest the sinner who humbles himself, and reproachest the proud man who is senseless enough to depend upon his justice, I address to Thee the prayer of the publican: "Be merciful to me, a sinner." I acknowledge myself, as he did, unworthy to lift up my eyes and appear before Thee. Have compassion on my unworthiness. May this prayer, which I know from the Gospel to be so efficacious, make up for the defects of so many other prayers which remain unanswered, simply for the reason that they were wanting in humility. I will often offer it to Thee, being convinced that it will touch Thy heart and obtain mercy for me; this prayer I shall repeat with a still greater confidence, when, after a moment, I shall have received the Adorable Sacrament which contains a specific virtue to repress or to cure all the elations of our pride: *O medicinam omnia tumentia comprimentem! Quae superbia sanari potest, si humilitate Filii Dei non sanatur?* (St. Aug. de Agone Christi.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Particular characteristic of pride. It affects to show itself. The humble publican stands afar off; the Pharisee goes to the foot of the altar. They perceive in his carriage, in his mode of prayer, that he admires himself, and wishes others to admire him. The very garb of humility is used at times to disguise pride.

Second Point.—Inconsistency and folly of pride. What did the Pharisee obtain through his pompous prayer? What of the publican who humbled himself? Blind as is the world, it only esteems the merit which despises it. What should we say of a man who would think himself a giant because he stood on the top of a mountain? What does the proud man obtain by seeking esteem? He is despised by men, punished by the Almighty. To Thee, O my God, I address the prayer of the publican: "Have mercy on me, a sinner."

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

"He hath done all things well."

MEDITATION CI.

TO DO WELL WHAT WE DO, IS A SURE MEANS TO PROGRESS RAPIDLY IN VIRTUE.

(Vol. I, page 452.)

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.

MEDITATION CII.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

1.—*Jesus Christ Himself the Good Samaritan.*
2.—*He Wills that His Disciples, and Especially His Priests, should Imitate His Charity.*

First Point.—Jesus Himself is the good Samaritan. After considering the sad state of the unfortunate traveler, and the hard-heartedness of the priest and the Levite, let us admire the charity of the good Samaritan. It portrays faithfully the conduct of Jesus Christ toward us. "A certain Samaritan, being on his journey, came near him." Why did the Son of God come down among men? His love alone prompted Him to undertake this journey. *Amoris actus impetu.* He knew to what a deplorable state sin had reduced us. He knew of what blessings it had deprived us, the wounds it had inflicted in our souls. If He had not come down to earth we should have had to suffer the most frightful death, for hell would have been our portion. He knew that we were more guilty than unfortunate; for we were rebellious slaves, standing up in arms against Him, bent on persevering in our rebellion. In these circumstances it was that He came, not to punish or destroy, as justice required, but to reconcile us and to save us. He clothed Himself with our infirmities in order to heal them; assumed our debts in order to pay them, our crimes in order to expiate them. As many grievous sins as we have committed, so many mortal wounds we have inflicted on our souls; and behold this generous Friend comes and binds up our sores with His grace!

The good Samaritan, moved with compassion at the sight of the unfortunate man weltering in his blood, bandages his wounds, pouring in oil and wine. This is not all; he stays with him the remainder of the day, and the whole of the following night. His business may perhaps suffer from this delay, but he does not think of it; his great affair is to assist a man who will die unless he receives immediate help. Being obliged to leave him, he provides for the future, recommending him to the innkeeper, to whom he leaves some money. He orders that nothing be spared in order to bring about his recovery, and promises that at his return he will pay in full all expenses. But how faint the figure is, compared with the reality! As soon as Our Lord came to us and saw our miseries, what did He do to remedy them? Did He set any bounds to His compassion? He sacrificed all for us. His goods, His rest, His reputation, His life. Nay, when He died, He did not forsake us, He confided us to His Church, in whose hands He deposited His treasures. He commissioned His ministers to take care of us; and will reward them magnificently for all they shall have done for our souls.

Had I been in the place of this man, what would have been my feelings toward my deliverer? Would I have neglected one single occasion to show him my gratitude? My life, which he had preserved, I would have freely spent in his service. O my soul, is not this the very thing which thou owest? Dost thou not owe still more to Jesus, thy Saviour, and thy God "who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who satisfieth thy desire with good things?" (Ps. cii. 3, 4, 5.) Do thou "bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all that He has done for thee." But is it enough to bless Him? Hear Him and He will tell what He expects of thy gratitude. "Go and do thou in like manner." Do thou for others what He has done for thee.

Second Point.—Jesus wills that His disciples, and particularly His priests, should imitate His charity. There is not another point of the divine law to which Our Lord reverts so often in His instructions. Now He declares that God will mete out to us as we have meted out to our brethren; that in so far as we have been merciful to others, He will be merciful to us. He declares at another time that our love should extend to those who hate us, if we will be the children of the heavenly Father. It may be said that He spoke of this obligation in season and out of season. When asked which is the first of all the commandments, He answers the question directly; but immediately adds, without being asked: The second is like unto the first, to love our neighbor as ourselves. He does more still; He adopts it, makes it His own personal com-

mandment. On what occasion? On the eve of His death, when speaking for the last time to His apostles in an outpouring of the most tender friendship; never before had His language borne the impress of so tender an affection. "Little children, yet a little while I am with you." I have but a few moments to spend with you, and these I employ in repeating to you what I recommended to you so often. Love one another as I have loved you. This is My commandment, the commandment which I most desire that you should observe. "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. This I command you to do. By this sign will the world know that you are My disciples." After which He raises His eyes to heaven and prays, in the first place for His apostles and His priests, and then for all those who, through them, were to believe in Him. What is the particular object of His prayer? "That they may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee;" that they may be one through mutual love, as we are one by nature. O blessed union of hearts, the image of the unity of one God in three persons! O fraternal charity, so dear to the heart of Jesus Christ! The function of the priesthood is to establish, to preserve, and make thee perfect on earth.

It is, however, above all, in their conduct toward sinners that priests find in this parable an admirable model. The good Samaritan overcomes the natural reluctance he feels at the sight under his eyes; he draws near. In like manner, desperate and repulsive as may seem to be the state of a soul given up to sin, the good priest does not forsake it; he draws near, he endeavors to gain its confidence. After this first success, he bandages the wounds of this poor soul; goes first to the very root of the evil, and begins by putting a stop to the course of his vicious habits; he pours oil and wine on his wounds, symbols of kindness and of strength. He does more: he withdraws him from the occasion of danger, and puts him in a place of safety. He continues to care for him, either in person or through others; he strengthens, encourages, comforts him. One can not tell how much patience and circumspection are necessary to the spiritual doctor in his cure of souls.

St. Bernard thanked God because He had poured upon his soul more oil than wine. Am I also particularly kind, patient, and compassionate in treating my diseased sheep?

In preparing for Mass I shall beg pardon of Jesus Christ for having so illy observed His precept; and principally that part of it which regards zeal for the salvation of stray souls. He gives me His heart every day in the celebration of the holy mysteries. When shall I participate in His tender charity for sinners?

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— Jesus Christ is the good Samaritan of the Gospel. Why did He come on earth? He knew the sad condition to which sin had reduced us. He came not to punish, but to heal and save. For us He sacrificed all, repose, reputation, life. He confided us to the Church, commanded His ministers to care for us, promising them an immense reward for their labors. Do thou, then, O my soul, bless the Lord, and never forget what thou hast received of His goodness.

Second Point.—Jesus wills that His disciples, but particularly His priests, imitate His charity. There is no doctrine to which He reverts so often as to that of charity; He continually reminds us of its obligation. The commandment of fraternal charity He adopts as His commandment. "Love one another, as I have loved you. . . . this is my commandment." O blessed union of all hearts, the image of the unity of God in three persons. Thou dost begin on earth the society of the elect. This parable offers for my imitation a model of the conduct I should hold toward sinners.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

"Were not ten made clean and where are the nine?" (Luke, xvii. 17.)

MEDITATION CIII.

INGRATITUDE TOWARD GOD.

1.—*Its Nature.*
2.—*Greatness of this Sin.*
3.—*Its Baneful Effects.*

First Point.—Nature of ingratitude toward God. Gratitude induces us to accomplish three duties: to remember the benefaction, thank the benefactor, and make a good use of His blessings. These three duties were accomplished perfectly by the leper, whose gratitude is presented as a model for our imitation. As soon as he feels himself healed, he turns his mind, his heart and his steps also, toward Him to whom he is indebted for so great a blessing. "When he saw that he was made clean, he went back." He glorifies God aloud. "With a loud voice, glorifying God." He falls at the feet of Jesus Christ to declare his attachment, as it were, and to consecrate to His service the health He restored to him. "He fell on his face before His feet, giving thanks." The ungrateful man

does quite the contrary. Instead of being mindful of the graces he has received, he forgets them; instead of thanking the Lord for them, he does not acknowledge having received them from Him, and attributes them to himself; instead of turning them to His service, he abuses them to offend Him.

In seeing those ten lepers going to meet the Saviour, standing off at a distance, asking Him so fervently to notice them—"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us"—one would have thought, that in case they were heard, nothing could efface from their minds the recollection of a favor so ardently desired. Yet scarcely have they received it, than all, except one, forget it. The very happiness caused by the blessing, and the pleasure found in its enjoyment, banish from their minds the remembrance of their Benefactor. God often reproached His people for this criminal ingratitude. Do we not deserve the same reproach? If we think on the blessings we enjoy, we pay no attention to the source whence they come. "There is no one found to return and give glory to God." We may not have the impudence to say: "Our mighty hand and not the Lord hath done all these things." (Deut. xxxii. 27), but we pretend that we are entitled to at least a share in the success. Man in his pride wishes he were indebted to no one save to himself; and not being able to gain this point, he endeavors to lessen his indebtedness. But the height of ingratitude is to outrage one's benefactor, and to turn His own gifts against Him. This is another reproach which God addresses to His people: "Thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob, neither hast thou labored about Me, O Israel; thou hast not offered Me the ram of the holocaust . . . but thou hast made Me serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied Me with thy iniquities." (Is. xliii. 22, 23, 24.) Ah, how common on earth, nay, among the priests of God themselves, is this profanation of the gifts of God; are the priests many who could truly say: Not one of the talents or goods which God has granted me did I ever use in the service of vanity, secret ambition, or any other passion?

Second Point.—Ingratitude toward God is a crime. The ungrateful man robs Almighty God of the only tribute He can and is willing to accept from His rational creatures. These are the words of the Lord: "Hear, O My people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify to thee, I am God, thy God." (Ps. xlix. 7.) Hear, My people; thou canst but acknowledge that I am thy God, and that having received of Me thy being and all that thou possessest, justice demands of thee to manifest thy gratitude. What wilt thou offer to Me? I have no need of temples or of victims. What canst thou offer to Me that I do not already possess? One thing I wish to receive from thee; a sacrifice of praise in

acknowledgment of My benefactions. "Offer to God the sacrifice of praise, and render homage to the Most High." (Ib.) And this is precisely what the ungrateful man refuses to God.

Nor is this all; if it were in the power of the ungrateful man, God would be deprived of all the fruits of His works in the creation and preservation of the material world. Faith and reason unite in demonstrating that God, the first, the infinite Being, can act for no other end but His own glory. "The Lord hath made all things for Himself." (Prov. xvi. 4.) Senseless creatures praise Him, each in their own way; and we may apply to all what the Prophet King said of the heavens: "The heavens proclaim the glory of God." They have no tongue, but their beauty invites man for whom they are made, to bless, to praise and thank their common benefactor. When man does not do so, he deprives God, as far as lies in his power, of the fruits of His labors; he prevents His creatures from accomplishing their ends, and makes himself a useless being, for he was created for no other purpose but to lend them his voice, and enable them to glorify the Lord.

Finally, ingratitude amounts to the denial of God. For the ungrateful man, God is no longer that adorable source whence flows all good, nor that last end to which everything should turn. He wickedly substitutes himself as the first principle, claiming the advantages he enjoys as if they came from himself, glorifying himself on their account, instead of giving glory to God for them. Such, says St. Augustine, is the essence of pride, and of the ingratitude which springs from it: *Quid est superbia, nisi perversae celsitudinis appetitus? Perversa enim celsitudo est, deserto eo cui animus adhaerere debet principio, sibi quodam modo fieri atque esse principium.* Should we wonder to hear the same Doctor say to God: *Scio quod ingratitudo multum tibi displiceat?* (Solil. 18.) St. Bernard also says: *Nihil ita displicet Deo, praesertim in filiis gratiae. . . . quemadmodum ingratitudo?* (Serm. de 7 Mis.) O Priests, you are not only the sons of grace, you are the fathers of grace, since you produce this divine virtue in the souls of your fellowmen; much more guilty would you be than the laity were you addicted to a vice so horrible in them.

Third Point.—Baneful effects of ingratitude toward God. St. Bernard says that this hateful vice is the great enemy of the soul; it annihilates its merits, ruins its virtues, is the cause of the loss of the blessings it had received. It is a burning wind, which dries up and exhausts the source of heavenly blessings: *Ingratitudo . . . ventus urens, siccans fontem pietatis, rorem misericordiae, fluenta gratiae.* (Serm. 51 in Cant.) It is a perverseness which takes away former graces, and prevents the receiving of others; for an

ungrateful man deserves to lose what he possesses, and not to obtain what he needs. The holy Doctor illustrates his idea by the following comparisons: If you oppose to a river an obstacle which will prevent it from flowing down to the sea, what shall be the consequence? In the first place the water of the river will become corrupt. *Fluminis aqua si stare coeperit, et ipsa putrescet;* and in the next place, the water coming from above shall be held back: *Et aqua superveniens repelletur.* Such is the fate of the ungrateful soul. Its disposition prevents the graces which it had received from procuring the glory of God and its own sanctification. Through its negligence these gifts are entirely lost; and, moreover, other graces have been held back. God refuses to give to that soul new favors which He had destined for it, and of which it rendered itself unworthy: *Sic plane gratiarum decursus cessabit, si recursus non fuerit: non modo nihil augetur ingrato, sed et quod acceperat vertitur ei in perniciem.* (St. B. Ibid.) Hence the Lord said to Jerusalem: "Because thou hast forgotten Me and hast cast Me behind thy back, bear thou also thy wickedness." (Ezech. xxiii. 35.) And what is this punishment? God teaches it to us through the prophet Osee. "I will not add any more to have mercy on the house of Israel, but I will utterly forget them." (Osee, i. 6.)

Let us dread the baneful effects of ingratitude. In order to preserve ourselves from it, let us often think of our vocation, and of the graces connected with it; or let us, rather, according to the counsel of St. Paul, offer continually to God a sacrifice of praise on the altar of our heart. "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise always to God" (Heb. xiii. 15), so that our fidelity to return thanks may ever draw down on us new and more excellent blessings: *Ut de preceptis numeribus gratias exhibentes, beneficia potiora sumanus.* (Missal.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Nature of ingratitude toward God. The opposite of gratitude. Gratitude demands of men to remember the benefaction, to thank the Benefactor, and to make good use of His gifts. Such was the conduct of the healed leper. The ungrateful man acts in a contrary manner. He remembers not the gifts; has no acknowledgment for the Benefactor; outrages Him by using against Him the gifts received at His hands. This criminal profanation of the gifts of God is unfortunately common.

Second Point.—Greatness of the sin of ingratitude. The ungrateful man robs God of the only tribute He cares to receive from

rational beings. "I have no need," says the Lord, "either of your gifts or of your victims; one thing only do I desire of you: a sacrifice of praise in return for My blessings." All creatures, the very beasts, proclaim the glory of God, and invite us to bless Him.

Third Point.—Baneful effe ts of ingratitude. According to St. Bernard it is a burning wind which dries up the dew of divine graces, and exhausts the source thereof. "Ungrateful city," says the Lord to Jerusalem, "because thou hast forgotten Me, I will forget thee also!" A dreadful punishment, which leads to reprobation.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

"Be not solicitous, saying, what shall we eat, etc."

MEDITATION CIV.

THE GOOD PRIEST HONORS PROVIDENCE.

(Vol. I, p. 415.)

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

"Behold a dead man was carried out."

MEDITATION CV.

DEATH.

(Vol. I, p. 217.)

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

"Sit down in the lowest place."

MEDITATION CVI.

HUMILITY NECESSARY TO APOSTOLIC MEN.

(Vol. I, p. 364.)

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart."

MEDITATION CVII.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

(Vol. I, p. 691.)

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

"Behold they brought to Him one sick with the palsy."

MEDITATION CVIII.

CARE OF THE SICK.

(Vol. I, p. 586.)

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

MEDITATION CIX.

THE EUCHARISTIC BANQUET.

1.—*It far Surpasses in Excellence all the Banquets of the World.*
2.—*The Mystical Robe to be Worn by Priests at this Banquet.*

First Point.—The Eucharistic banquet to be preferred to all the banquets of the world. Who gives this banquet? "The immortal King of ages." He united His Son to the Church with indissoluble bonds; the Eucharistic supper is the mystical feast. God it is who entertains, and He entertains as God. Isaias had a glimpse of the magnificence of this banquet, and he said: "The Lord of hosts shall make unto all people in this mountain a feast of fat things, a feast of wine, of fat things full of marrow." (Is. xxv. 6.) The Church, composed of men of all nations, calls all her children to the table prepared for them by her adorable Spouse. She makes use of your voice, O Priest, to invite them to partake of it. She commands you to instruct, to urge, to use, if necessary, a sort of holy violence, that they may enter the hall of the nuptial feast. "Go ye into the highways, and as many as you shall find, call to the marriage." (Matt. xxii. 9.) "Go out quickly into the lanes and streets of the city." (Luke, xiv. 21.) "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in." (Ib.) Ah, did men know the honor and blessings which Jesus Christ offers them when He says: "Come, eat My bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you" (Prov. ix. 5), how ardently they would hasten toward the house of God, to receive the heavenly Gift from your hands! *O sacrum convivium, in quo Christus sumitur, recolitur memoria passionis ejus, mens impletur gratia, et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur!*

Consider each of these words, endeavor to understand them, and explain to the laity the differences which exist between the Eucharistic banquet and the most attractive feasts of the world.

The latter are profane festivities; they tend neither to the glory of God nor man's eternal happiness. The banquet of Jesus is sacred: *O sacrum convivium!* Everything in it is calculated to glorify God and to sanctify souls, for nothing contributes as much as communion to advance us in holiness.

The banquets of the world are much praised and sought after when they present a great variety of choice foods. These are desired to be in such abundance that the taste of every guest may be satisfied; and as there is no kind of food on earth that contains in itself all sweetness, neither is there any dish that can, of itself, procure full satiety. At the banquet of Jesus, only one kind of food is served, and that is Jesus Himself: *In quo Christus sumitur.* This Bread of life which "came down from heaven," this treasure of infinite value, and the principle of all good, contains in itself all that the heart of man can desire. Far better than the manna, which was the figure of it, it procures to the just the most pure delights, and satisfies the noble cravings of the soul. "What have I in heaven, and beside Thee what do I desire upon earth?" (Ps. lxxii. 25.)

In the feasts of the world they speak not of death, of pains, and afflictions; they will hear nothing but what flatters and pleases. In the Eucharistic banquet everything speaks of the death and Passion of the Son of God. We recall them to our memory: *Recolitur memoria passionis ejus.* On one hand this recollection is bitter, on the other it is full of sweetness. "He loved me, and gave Himself up for me." How useful it is, especially through the sentiments which it inspires, the virtues it engenders and brings to perfection.

Men retire from worldly feasts with surfeited body, often with a soul defiled by sin, and a mind incapable of recollection. But here, how great the profit which the interior man draws from holy communion! Here he receives, not one grace, but the plenitude of graces, the very Source of all graces: *Mens impletur gratia.*

Hence arises another difference, the consequence of the others. While worldly banquets, through the excesses and sins committed therein, often occasion the loss of the body and also of the soul, a pious participation in the Eucharistic banquet saves the whole man, and is a pledge of our predestination: *Et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur.* "A well-received communion is a letter of recommendation to heaven." (Lallemant.) As this sacred meat sanctifies the body as well as the soul, it impresses upon us a seal of

life everlasting, whenever we partake of it worthily, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath life everlasting," and deposits within our flesh a germ of glorious resurrection, "And I will raise him up at the Last Day." Did you initiate souls into the knowledge of the spiritual treasures with which a worthy communion enriches them? Did you meditate on it sufficiently yourself? For you have not simply been commissioned to invite your brethren, prepare them for the feast of the great King, do the honors of His table; you are the very first of the guests, and if none receives the heavenly bread save at your hands, neither is there any one that eats it save after you. What do you owe Jesus Christ?

Second Point.—What sort of nuptial garment should the priest wear at the Eucharistic banquet? Shall the sanctuary be profaned by the very man appointed to guard it? We have considered elsewhere the enormity of this crime, the crime of a sacrilegious Mass! We may, from the Gospel of this day, conjecture what shall be its punishment: "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding-garment? . . . then the King said to the waiters: bind his hands and feet and cast him into exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This wedding-garment is charity; but how perfect should it be in the privileged friend of Jesus, who ascends the altar every day and every day participates in the sacred banquet! The heart of the faithful may be compared to those inns along the highway wherein a king stops but rarely; in them he does not expect to find splendor, and is satisfied with what is necessary for a traveler; the case is different in the palace which he built and furnished to be his habitual dwelling; everything there should be magnificent. Your soul, O Priest, is the palace of the King of the universe; He lavished on it the riches of His grace, adorned it with all the virtues. Can you think that He will be pleased if He finds in it none but common, ordinary dispositions and virtues? The holy Doctors declare that you should be resplendent with holiness as the sun is resplendent with brightness; that having been preferred before angels for the discharge of functions so heavenly, your life ought to be angelical rather than human. Meditate on the teaching of the Church in the Council of Trent: *Si necessario fatemur nullum aliud opus adeo sanctum ac divinum a Christi fidelibus tractari posse, quam hoc ipsum tremendum mysterium . . . satis etiam apparet omnem operam et diligentiam in eo ponendam esse, ut quanta maxima fieri poterit interiori cordis munditia et puritate, atque exteriori devotionis ac pietatis specie peragatur.* (Sess. xxii.)

To the language of words, the Church adds that of deeds. Before it permits us to exercise the most sublime of our functions

it leads us to a sacred place, wherein are deposited the insignia of our office of sacrificers. Here, as it were, in the entrance-hall of heaven, it prepares us to appear before the throne of God. Through the significance attached to the blessed vestments which will soon adorn our person, the Church offers us a striking image of her Spouse, such as He was during His Passion. The amice, cincture, maniple, stole, everything betokens the humiliations and sufferings of Jesus. She would fain clothe His representative with the innocence and purity represented by the alb, and with the charity of which the chasuble is an emblem. In every manner she reminds us that eminent holiness is required to enter the holy of holies.

Alas, how do many prepare themselves for the Holy Sacrifice, and the sacred banquet which completes it? Why do we not find in priests, save in the more interior ones, this wholesome fear which, far from destroying confidence, becomes its strongest foundation? "I fear," says P. Berthier, "lest the adorable Victim who is so often in my hands, may rise up one day against me, and put the seal on my reprobation. In order to incur this misfortune, it is not necessary to fall into shameful crimes, to entirely ignore the principles of religion. A lukewarm, easy, sensual life, views exclusively human in the general run of my actions, a heart void of God's presence in prayer, a multitude of worldly interests and of useless conversations, enterprises of interest or ambition, an almost continual neglect of Christian mortification, extreme sensibility regarding anything connected with the esteem of the world, finally, a great self-love and little love for God, suffice to precipitate a priest into the bottom of the abyss." (Ref. Spirit., c. x, 1st Ep. to the Corint.)

Examine yourself regarding a point of so great importance, and follow the advice given you by St. Ambrose: *Mutet vitam qui vult accipere vitam; nam si non mutat vitam, ad judicium accipiet vitam.* (Serm. Dom. iv. adv.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— Excellence of the Eucharistic banquet. God it is who entertains, and He entertains as God. "Come," He says, "eat My bread; drink the wine which I have mingled for you." *O sacrum convivium.* Why *sacrum?* Because everything here is holy, principally the meat. *In quo Christus sumitur,* and the admirable facts it brings to our recollection: *Recolitur memoria passionis ejus.* What abundance and plenitude of graces we receive at this banquet: *Mens impletur gratia.* The worthy, fre-

quent reception of this Sacrament is a certain pledge of our predestination: *Et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur.* Every well-received communion is, as it were, a letter of recommendation for heaven.

Second Point.—What sort of nuptial garment should the priest wear at this banquet? Sanctifying grace or charity suffice to avoid committing a frightful profanation; but how perfect should not this charity be in the privileged friend of Jesus? The soul of the faithful may be compared to an inn wherein the king lodges only occasionally, and for a short time. Your soul, O Priest, is the palace of the great King of heaven. *Solaribus radiis puriorem esse oportet animam sacerdotis.* You have been preferred to angels for the performing of an action so heavenly. Your life ought to be more angelical than human.

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.

"The man believed the word which Jesus said to him."

MEDITATION CX.

POWER OF FAITH.

(Vol. I, p. 304.)

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.

MEDITATION CXI.

THE PRIESTLY TALENT.

"The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king who would take an account of his servants." (Matt. xviii. 23.) This parable may be united to the one contained in the twenty-fifth chapter of the same Gospel of St. Matthew. Both apply so naturally to priests, that Origen thought himself entitled to say: *Servi hi soli sunt qui dispensatores verbi habentur, et quibus hoc est commissum, ut negotientur et fenerent.* (Tract 7 in Mat.)

1.—*The Talent Confided to us through our Priestly Consecration.*

2.—*Blessedness of the Priest who Faithfully Uses the Talent he has Received.*

3.—*Misfortune of the Priest who Buries his Talent.*

First Point.—What was the talent confided to me on the day of my ordination? Encomiums and rewards are decreed to the good use one makes of gifts received, and not to the great number and excellence of those gifts; but the more numerous and excellent they are, the greater is the responsibility of the recipient. What then shall I say of my responsibility? If, owing to the natural and purely human talents which I have received, I shall be subjected to a rigorous account, what must I think of the heavenly talent attached to my priestly consecration?

It is a general law of God's providence that when He calls a person to an office, He grants him the graces necessary to fulfil it worthily. In His infinite wisdom He proportions the means to the end. The end of the priest's mission is none else than that of Jesus Christ's. "As the living Father sent Me, so do I send you." What graces and powers he needs who must continue the work of the Redemption; propagate the knowledge and love of God, defend and comfort the Church, sanctify and save immortal souls! What do the holy Doctors say on this subject: *Potestas sacerdotis est sicut potestas divinarum personarum.* (St. Ber. Sen. serm. xx.) *Sacerdotibus datum est, ut potestatem habeant, quam Deus optimus neque Archangelis datam esse voluit; neque enim ad illos dictum est: Quodcumque ligaveritis super terram,* etc. (St. Chrys. lib. 3 de Sacerd. iv.)

Here are the words of St. Thomas: *Deus posuit Ordinem in Ecclesia, ut quidam aliis sacramenta traderent, suo modo Deo in hoc assimilati, quasi Deo cooperantes: sicut in corpore naturali quaedam membra aliis influunt.* (Sum. Sup. quaest. 34.)

Thou didst indeed, O Lord, confide to me the richest and most precious of all talents, when admitting me to the honor of announcing Thy word, of blessing Thy people, presiding at prayer, remitting sins; but especially of offering Thyself in sacrifice for the living and the dead: *Sacerdotum oportet offerre, benedicere, praesse, praedicare et baptizare.* (Pont.) When hanging on Thy cross, Thou didst look up to heaven in order to glorify Thy Father on His throne, Thou didst turn Thy eyes to the earth in order to sanctify the men who dwell on it; and Thou didst look down into limbo also in order to free the souls of the just detained there; thus likewise should Thy minister act in his different functions, but principally at the holy altar. Heaven, earth, purgatory are waiting to see what use he will make of his talents. Let him consider how important it is for him to use them properly.

Second Point.—Blessedness of the priest who faithfully uses the talent he has received. He is blessed on earth through that fidelity itself; but what of the eternal happiness which shall be its

reward in heaven? When he refers to God alone the gifts which he acknowledges he has received from Him, he is not dazzled by their excellence nor puffed up by the praises bestowed upon him; humble in time of success; firm in the midst of contradictions and trials; his zeal, ever tranquil, does ever enjoy the sweetness of peace. Is there not much comfort in the thought: "My life is spent in the service of God and of my neighbor; I have no ambition nor do I wish to have any ambition save to glorify the Lord, and to prepare creatures, whom He loves, to glorify Him eternally by participating in His sovereign felicity?"

But if Thy minister, O my God, seeks naught but Thee on earth, wilt Thou not return to him glory for glory, the glory of the elect for the glory of the world which, for the love of Thee, he has despised? St. Gregory has given us a description of the apostles coming before Jesus Christ on the Last Day, and offering to Him the fruit of their talents. The description is admirable: *Unusquisque quid sit operatus ostendetur. Ibi Petrus cum Judaea conversa, quam post se traxit, apparebit; ibi Paulus conversum, ut ita dixerim, mundum ducens; ibi Andreas post se Achaiam, ibi Joannes Asiam, Thomas Indiam in conspectu sui judicis ducet.* (Hom. 17, in Evang.) But next to those heroes of the Gospel who have conquered nations and peoples, there will appear in glory all the good priests who shall have gained to God as many souls as they could: *ibi omnes dominici gregis arietes, cum animarum lucris apparebunt.* (Ibid.) The one will say: "Lord, Thou didst deliver to me five talents, behold I have gained other five, over and above." The other will thus speak: "Lord, Thou didst deliver to me two talents, behold I have gained other two." To all He will answer: "Well done, good and faithful servant." I shall proportion My reward to the ardor of thy desires, to the purity of the motives which animated and guided thy zeal; My joy could not enter within thy heart. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." O my soul, is there any labor that should frighten thee when there is question of gaining this crown, and of escaping the dread punishment destined to the servant who has hid his talent?

Third Point.—Sad state of the priest who does not use the talent he has received. The servant who had received but one talent, drawing near his master, said to him: "I know that thou art a hard man." Passion blinds men; they throw the blame on the law, when they have not the courage to observe it. "Being afraid, I went and hid thy talent in the earth." This is culpable negligence, baneful illusion; they are afraid to drown with those who suffer shipwreck, and they forget that, being obliged to preserve them from this misfortune by all possible means, they are

lost themselves from the mere fact that they strive not to save others. Hence we see how the master qualifies the servant who had neither squandered the talent nor gained anything else. "Wicked and slothful servant!" To omit the good we are bound to do is evil; and refusing to be useful when we can, is, according to St. Augustine, wickedness and cruelty: *Nulli prodesse impium et crudele est.* (Enarr. in ps. xcv.) Let us judge of the nature of the crime by the greatness of the punishment: "Take away the talent from him;" deprivation of graces and of heavenly gifts: "Cast him in the outer darkness;" eternal banishment from the face of God and the glory of the elect: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;" eternal torment, consummate despair.

The idleness of the clergy allows liberty to all the passions; need we be surprised that it provokes outbursts of the justice of God? Priests, who, after a few years of labor in the ministry, hasten to retire from it, in order to lead an easy and almost useless life, as if God and the Church had no more claims upon them, ought to read and meditate upon the following words: "Neglect not the grace which is in thee, which was given to thee;" and take the resolution which St. Basil suggests to us: *Unusquisque, quocumque tandem dono eum Deus dignatus sit, id multiplicet, hoc ipso ad beneficentiam et utilitatem plurium adhibito.* (Regul. Brev. 253.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— What is the talent confided to me on the day of my ordination? Rewards are decreed to the good use of gifts received, not to their number and excellence. God proportions the means to the end; the end of the priest is the same as that of Jesus Christ, to continue the work of Redemption! See also the powers conferred on you! *Potestas sacerdotis est sicut potestas divinarum personarum.* From His cross on Calvary Christ looked up to heaven in order to glorify His Father in heaven; He turned His eyes to the earth, desiring to sanctify mankind which inhabits it; He looked into limbo to free the just souls which it contained. So it is with the priest. Heaven, earth, purgatory, wait in expectation to see the use he will make of his talents.

Second Point.—Blessedness of the priest who faithfully uses his talent. His very fidelity renders him happy. Great is the comfort he experiences at the thought: "My life is spent in the service of God and of my neighbor. I glorify the Lord, and prepare souls to glorify Him eternally." If Thy minister seeks naught but Thee on earth, O my God, wilt Thou not return him glory for glory, the

glory of the elect for the glory of the world which he despised? What labor can cause him any dread when he thinks on the crown prepared for him?

Third Point.—Sad state of the priest who neglects to use his talent. To omit the good which one is bound to do is evil; refusing to be useful when it is possible, is, according to St. Augustine, wickedness and cruelty. "Take away the talent from him; cast him into exterior darkness; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." The inaction of the clergy prepares the triumph of hell. "Neglect not the grace which is in thee."

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.

"Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." (Matt. xxii. 21.)

MEDITATION CXII.

DUTIES OF THE CLERGY TOWARD THOSE IN TEMPORAL POWER.

1.—*They should Teach their People what their Obligations are Toward those who Govern them.*

2.—*They should give them the Example of Fidelity to the Law of God regarding this Matter.*

First Point.—The clergy should teach the faithful what their duties are toward those who govern them. This point of the moral doctrine of the Gospel is delicate; but its importance is such that it should excite our zeal. When the Pharisees asked the Saviour if it were lawful to pay the tribute to Cæsar, they thought they had laid a snare for Him into which He must fall. "If He answer in the affirmative, He will lose the esteem of His countrymen who consider the Romans usurpers, He will pass for a traitor to His nation. If He deny the obligation to pay the tribute, He declares Himself the enemy of the Romans; His action, whatever it may be, must render Him hateful either to the people or to the sovereign power." And Our Lord pronounces those words which nations and peoples never forget but to their own misfortune: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, to God the things that are God's." Let us imitate our Model; let us be prudent, but let us speak; truth should be declared. Let us teach the faithful that they have a two-fold obligation toward their superiors in the temporal order. They should respect their dignity and submit to their authority.

I. Religion teaches that we are bound to respect our temporal rulers; but by so doing it elevates us, for it teaches us also to offer this respect to God alone, whom we venerate in the representatives of His power.

"By Me do kings reign," says the eternal wisdom. Not only do the rights of temporal power come from God, not only are these established by His law, but the choice of the persons who are clothed with this power is the work of Providence; whether they owe their elevation to birth, for God is the Master of nature, or whether they obtain them by election, for God presides over all councils. The majesty of a king or President is a reflection of the majesty of God. "Fear God, honor the King." The second of these obligations is a consequence of the first. Fear God. St. Paul, after often repeating that princes are the ministers of God, adds the following: "Render . . . honor to whom honor is due." (Rom. xiii. 7.)

Bossuet applies to kings the words of the Prophet: "You are gods and you are all the children of the Most High." And next he exclaims: "But, O you, gods of flesh and blood, gods of earth and dust, shall die like men. You are gods, however, though liable to die, for your dignity does not die; this spirit of royalty passes entire unto your successors, and impresses everywhere the same respect, the same veneration." St. Gregory Nazianzen, preaching in presence of emperors, invites them to consider their own persons, in order to behold in their own greatness the brightness of divine majesty. "O monarchs," says he to them, "know the mystery of God in your persons. High things are His only; inferior ones He shares with you. Be you, therefore, subjects of God, as you are His images."

The same teaching is found in all the books of the Old Testament, wherein we find it recommended to respect temporal superiors in our very thoughts. "Detract not the king, no, not in thy thought." (Ecclus. x. 20.) And wherein also are related and praised beautiful examples of this respect. What more admirable than David's respect for Saul, and that even after God had chosen him to reign in his stead, and at the time also that this prince persecuted him with great fury?

II. Submission is due the authority of Cæsar on the same ground that respect is due his dignity. The temporal monarch is simply the delegate of the eternal monarch. We can not but wonder how persistently Jesus Christ and His apostles inculcated this doctrine, when we remember in whose hands civil powers were placed in those days.

The Saviour was about to die. What does He say to the

Roman prætor who made such an ill use of his authority? "Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above." (John, xix. 11.) Nothing could be more precise. God, who reigns in heaven, He it was who had given Pilate the power which he exercised over Jesus Christ. For we read also, "There is no power but from God, and those that are, are ordained by God." (Rom. xiii. 11.) The powers which we find established, *quae sunt*, are they to which we can not refuse obedience without refusing it to God Himself. "Let, therefore, every soul be subject to higher powers . . . not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake." (Ibid.) St. Peter forbids discriminating among the different representatives of power. All hold their power from God; we should, therefore, obey all. "Be ye, therefore, subject to every human creature for God's sake; whether to the king as excelling, or to governors as sent by Him." (1 Pet. xi. 13.)

Here is a sublime idea which God gives us of sovereigns. He shows them to us clothed with a power they have received from Him; He places their thrones in the safest of places, viz.: in the conscience of men, wherein He Himself hath His throne. Faith acknowledges in them no fault depriving them of their right to command, except they command the doing of something which God forbids, or forbid a thing to be done which He commands; for it is just to obey God rather than men.

While religion renders civil authority inviolable, by consecrating its rights, it imposes great obligations on those in whom authority is vested. The representatives of this authority are our masters; but they have also a Master whom they must dread. If they cause others to tremble, they must tremble in their turn at the expectation of a judgment which shall be all the more severe, and of torments all the more dreadful that they shall have been more elevated above other men in power and honor. "A more severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule . . . . the mighty shall be mightily tormented." (Wisd. vi. 6, 7.) Priests can not leave their people in ignorance of these obligations; they should fulfil them themselves with greater attention than their hearers.

Second Point.—Obligations of the clergy toward those in temporal power. We are the physicians of souls, and we know the predominant evil of our days. If the faithful do not see in us models of respect and obedience toward temporal superiors, shall we be able to combat with efficacy that fever of socialism which is manifesting itself every day by alarming signs, and endangering society itself?

Submitting to the capricious edict of a pagan emperor, the Saviour humbled Himself so far as to be born in a stable. He

consented to die on the cross without contradicting the iniquitous decree which condemned Him. While forming the first evangelical laborers to their apostolate, He performed a miracle in order to teach His ministers how carefully they should avoid anything which might give disedification. After demonstrating that there was no obligation on His part to pay the tribute, He immediately told St. Peter, whom He destined to be the head of all: "But, that we may not scandalize them, go to the sea and cast in a hook, and take the fish which shall first come up; and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a shekel; take that and give it to them, for Me and for thee." (Matt. xvii. 26.)

Priests of Jesus Christ, take the conduct of your adorable Master for your rule; let your words, your actions, everything in you strengthen the great principle of obedience to lawful authority, so powerfully shaken in our days. Finally, let us pray, as St. Paul exhorts us to do, for those who, under God, participate in the government of the people, and who exert such an influence, not merely over their temporal, but also over their eternal destinies. There is nothing more pleasing to Our Lord Jesus Christ. "I desire, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgiving be made for all men; for kings and all those who are in high station, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all piety and charity, for this is good and acceptable before God, our Saviour." (1 Tim. ii. 1.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The clergy should teach the faithful concerning their obligation toward those who govern them. Let us, after the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ, be prudent in instructing in so delicate a matter; but let us not fail to instruct. We have two duties to fulfil toward our superiors in the temporal order: we should respect their dignity and submit to their authority.

I. God it is whom we honor in the representatives of His power. "By Me do kings reign." The second of these obligations is a consequence of the first. This doctrine is found in the books of the Old Testament as well as those of the New.

II. Submission is due to authority on the same ground as respect is due to dignity. The temporal ruler is only the delegate of the eternal King. "Thou shouldst not have any power against Me unless it were given thee from above." Lawfully established power, *quae sunt*, are those to which we can not refuse obedience without refusing it to God. It is true, however, that religion imposes great duties upon princes. "A more severe judgment shall be for those who bear rule."

Second Point.—The clergy should give the example in this matter. We are physicians of souls; we should combat the predominant passion of our age, the spirit of socialism. Here, also, Our Lord showed Himself our Model in His nativity, during His life, and in His sufferings and death.

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.

MEDITATION CXIII.

DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS—DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF SOULS THE GREAT OBJECT OF PASTORAL SOLICITUDE.

1.—*The Soul Dies by Sin, which Separates it from God.*
2.—*The Soul is Restored to Life by the Grace of Justification, which Reconciles it to God.*

First Point.—Death of the soul by sin. The soul, according to its natural life, can not die. Not so as to its supernatural and divine life, which, alas, it too often loses! *Ita immortalis est ut mori possit, ita mortalis ut mori non possit.* (St. Greg. 4 Mor. ch. 7.) Sin begets death. *Peccatum cum consummatum fuerit, generat mortem.* (Jas. i. 15.) God is the life of the soul, as the soul is the life of the body: *Sicut anima est vita corporis, sic animae vita est Deus.* (St. Aug. de. Verb. Dom.) You think that man lives because he walks, sees, speaks? You are deceived. That which lives in him is but the least of himself—his body. The house still stands, but it is inhabited only by the dead. We weep over a body from which the soul has departed, and have no tears of compassion for the soul separated from God by sin. (St. Aug.)

Between a corpse and a soul in mortal sin, there are striking analogies. The most beautiful face becomes repulsive under the withering hand of death. So does sin wreak a hideous deformity upon the soul. The richest man has nothing the moment he dies; and the soul richest in merit before God loses all the moment it incurs His displeasure by sin. After death it is no longer possible to amass riches; neither can the soul in the death of sin acquire anything meritorious for eternal life. In that corpse there is a heart, but it no longer beats; there are eyes, but they no longer see; ears but they no longer hear. Is this not an image of the sinner stricken with spiritual blindness and obduracy of heart? God

moves heaven and earth to arouse him, but he remains insensible to all. And just as a corpse exhales noxious odors, so does a soul in the corruption of sin spread around it the deadly odor and contagion of scandal. Finally, as the body, separated from the soul, will soon be cast into the grave, there to become food for worms, so the soul dead in sin, if it return not to life by returning to God, shall be buried in hell, there to be devoured by the worm of a remorse which dieth not.

Priest of God, is this the state of some, perhaps of a great number, of your spiritual children? How awful the thought! When the Lord, in order by a final plague-stroke to soften the hardened heart of Pharao, slew in one night the first-born in all the land of Egypt, a great wail of grief was heard throughout the kingdom: *Ortus est clamor magnus in Ægypto.* The sacred writer gives as reason for this great lamentation that there was not a family throughout the land but had a dead member to bewail. (Ex. xi.) Pastor of souls, does God see many houses in your parish in which there are no dead? Does He not see in it some families in which there are none but dead? Yet where are the sighs? where are the afflicted hearts? where are the tears? Nobody gives it a thought. Reflect on it, O you, at least, who are the spiritual fathers of so many unhappy souls! Say with Jeremias: "Who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes, and I will weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people?" (ix. 1.) But, while bewailing their death, neglect no means of recalling them to life.

Second Point.—Resurrection of the soul through the grace of justification. The Gospel mentions only three visible resurrections wrought by Jesus Christ; but those which He wrought invisibly are counted by the thousands, says St. Augustine. And oh, how much more gratifying to His divine heart are these! All things of which spiritual death had stripped the soul, beauty, merits, dignity, acquired rights, all are restored to it by sanctifying grace, when it has the happiness to recover God's friendship. It is a deposed and captive king reascending his throne. If the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus, of the widow's son of Naïm, and of Lazarus, was each an occasion of great joy to their families, we know how far greater is the joy in heaven over the conversion of one sinner. But how will the priest merit to become the instrument of that conversion? By following the example of the prince of the synagogue, whose grief and joy are related in the Gospel of this day. He sees his daughter at the point of death. He has immediate recourse to the Author of life. He draws nigh unto Jesus, adores Him, fearlessly entreats Him. His grief is his sufficient excuse.

"O Lord," he says, "my daughter is even now dead, but come, lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live!" According to St. Mark, the ruler "besought Him much." (Mark, v.) When doing God's work, let us always put our chief reliance upon God, let our confidence be as unlimited as His power and goodness. Let us draw near unto Jesus, and say to Him: Those children whom Thou hast confided to me are dead. Sin has separated them from Thee, the only principle of true life. But come to them in the person of Thy minister, speak to them through his lips, "breathe upon them the breath of life, and they shall rise again." (Ezech. xxxvii. 9.)

How kindly the Son of God hears the prayer of Jairus. "And Jesus, rising, followed him." On the way He strengthens the man's faith by healing the woman troubled with the issue of blood. He enters the house. Those gathered therein "laughed Him to scorn."

Nevertheless He performs the miracle. Now, if Jesus, moved by the tears of a father, restores life to a body which must again succumb to death, how much more ardently does He not desire to resurrect souls which shall live forever? Go, therefore, with confidence to the altar, reanimate your faith, re-enkindle your zeal, and when you shall see with your own eyes, and hold in your own hands, and possess within your breast the Victim immolated for the Redemption of sinners, pray fervently for all those who are dead spiritually, for whose resurrection the Church makes increasing supplication, but in an especial manner remember those whose salvation has been confided to your care. Remember that God shows mercy in proportion to our fervor, and the firmness of our confidence when we ask for mercy: *Fiat misericordia tua Domine, super nos quemadmodum speravimus in te.* "Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have hoped in Thee." (Ps. xxxii. 22.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Death of the soul by sin. God is the life of the soul, as the soul is the life of the body. Striking analogies between a corpse and a soul in mortal sin. They have lost everything, beauty, possession, sensibility. Both are destined to return to dust, to be food for worms. Alas, this may be the state of many of whom the care has been confided to me! If no one be concerned on their account, shall not I, who am their father, grieve at the sight of their miserable state?

Second Point.—Resurrection of the soul by the grace of justification. All that sin had taken away from that soul, beauty, merits, rights, is returned to her with sanctifying grace. Joy in heaven

at the conversion of a sinner. What must the priest do to become an instrument of conversion? Let him imitate Jairus. Let him ardently pray to Our Saviour. If, out of regard for the tears of a father, Jesus brought back to life a body which was to die anew, will He not be much more willing to give life to souls which shall live eternally?

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost.

MEDITATION CXIV.

DEDICATION OF CHURCHES; RESPECT DUE TO THEM.

The patriarch Jacob, after a mysterious dream in which the presence of the Lord was made manifest to him, being seized with a holy fear, cried out: "How terrible is this place! This is the house of God and the gate of heaven!" These two designations, which apply so well to our churches, remind us of two obligations which concern priests and people alike, namely, to respect and to love the house of God.

1.—*Respect the Church; it is the House of God.*
2.—*Love the Church; it is the Gate of Heaven.*

First Point.—Our churches are the house of God, therefore we should hold them in reverence. When Solomon, surrounded by all the people of Israel, dedicated to the Almighty the magnificent Temple which he had built, the splendor of the ceremonies, and the divine majesty which filled the house and was sensibly felt, filled the assembly with such a profound feeling of religious awe that they prostrated themselves to the ground and cried out with their king: "Is it credible then that God should dwell with men on the earth?" (2 Par. vi. 18.) We, too, should experience like feelings of awe every time we enter a church, if we were thoroughly impressed with the sense of these words: "This is the house of God!" Yes, really God's house! It has been consecrated to Him. He has accepted it as His abiding-place upon earth. Herein He manifests His divine presence. To the eye of faith how marvelous is the beauty of even the humblest church!

Religion alone inspired the thought of rearing it. Religion gathered the materials, laid the foundations, raised the walls. It was completed, it was decorated, but it was not yet the house of God. It became His temple on the day when the Church, by

solemn prayers and consecrations, separated it from profane edifices and consecrated it to divine worship. Then was offered there the sacrifice of the Lamb without spot, and then the Saviour came to take possession of it, not to abide there transitorily only, but to make it His permanent home. From that day we can rightly say of it: *Ecce tabernaculum Dei cum hominibus, et habitabit in eis;* and the promise of Jesus Christ, *ecce ego vobiscum sum usque ad consummationem saeculi*, is, by the continual presence of the Blessed Eucharist, again realized.

As a monarch, though sovereign in all his realms, yet has palaces in certain places where he receives the homage of his subjects, gives audiences, and more immediately exercises his authority; so also God, who is everywhere present by His essence, His power, and His providence, willed to have temples wherein to dwell among men, to receive the public worship due to Him, and to accomplish the great designs of His mercy. Is it not especially in our churches that our divine Saviour continues His work of Redemption? Does He not still enlighten the blind, heal the sick, restore the dead to life? To each of our temples, but in a much higher sense than to the Temple of Solomon, applies these words of the Lord: "I have chosen this place to Myself for a house of sacrifice. . . . My eyes also shall be open, and My ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place . . . and My eyes and My heart may remain there perpetually." (2 Par. vii. 15, 16, 17.) What follows, therefore, but that no place in the whole universe deserves so much veneration as this chosen temple of God? The Catholic sanctuary is much more worthy of reverence than the ancient tabernacle. Can the manna be compared to the most august of our Sacraments? "I will come into Thy house; I will worship toward Thy holy temple in Thy fear." (Ps. v. 8.)

O my God, has this always been my conduct? If guiltless of exterior irreverence to Thy supreme majesty in Thy house, how has it been with regard to the interior recollection of my soul? My body and my lips have paid Thee exterior homage; but my heart, alas! has often been far from Thee. Henceforth may Thy adorable presence so occupy my whole mind, that in Thy holy temple I may think of naught but Thee! When I enter there, I will say with St. Bernard: "Thoughts of earth, stay outside. This is no time or place for you." "The temple of God," says St. Nicholas, "is a most heavenly place; when we are there we should not allow ourselves a thought or an action that savors of earth."

Second Point.—Our churches are the gate of heaven; therefore we should love them. It is by grace that we gain heaven, and all sources of grace are opened for us in the sacred temples

of the Church. At her baptismal fonts we were first invested with that robe of innocence which made us children of God, brothers and co-heirs of Jesus Christ. In her tribunals of mercy our sins are remitted, and all our rights to our heavenly inheritance are restored to us. In her tabernacles dwells the Sanctifier of our souls, ever ready to lavish His blessings on us. At her holy tables we receive the Bread of angels, the principle and pledge of our glorious immortality. Her altars are a new Calvary, on which the great Victim daily renews the mystery of our Redemption. From her pulpit God teaches and exhorts us; for to hear His minister is to hear Himself.

The church, therefore, is for every Christian the ante-chamber of heaven. If enemies persecute him, there he finds refuge. In this arsenal he finds whatever weapons he needs for his defence. Let the favor he desires be what it may, the house of God is always the house of prayer, and of prayer heard more readily. Great, then, must be the attraction which the church has for the man of faith! A thrill of joy pervades his heart when he hears the invitation: "Let us go to the house of the Lord."

Lord of hosts, who would not love Thy tabernacles? "My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord." "The sparrow hath found itself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself. . . . Thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. . . . this is the house of God and the gate of heaven!" In order never again to fail in reverence for this house of God, nor in my ardent desire to visit it, it will be enough to say to myself: "This is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven!"

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Our churches are the house of God. We should respect them, because they are consecrated to Him, because He dwells in them, and ceases not to manifest His presence in them. They were built for God, they have been separated, and dedicated to the worship of God. After those ceremonies and prayers which imparted to them a religious character, the Holy Sacrifice was offered in them and Jesus took possession of them. From that time, it could be said of the church so consecrated: "Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them." The real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is a literal accomplishment of the promise: "Behold I am with you all the days." Jesus Christ is with us in our sanctuaries, and He is not inactive there; here He continues His work of Redemption, enlightening, healing souls, applying to them the merits of His blood. Of each

one of our churches He says: "I have chosen and sanctified this place, that My name may be there. My eyes shall be open and My ears attentive. My heart shall be there." Let us understand that no place in the world is worthy of so much veneration. Henceforth, when entering a church, I shall say with St. Bernard: "Stay out, thoughts of earth; this is neither your time nor your place."

Second Point.—Our churches are the gate of heaven; let us love them. We enter heaven through grace; all the sources of grace are opened to us in our churches through the sacrifice, the sacraments, and the preaching of God's word. The holy place is in reality the entrance-hall of heaven; our refuge; our arsenal; in no other place is our prayer so readily heard. "I have rejoiced in the things that were said to me, we shall go into the house of the Lord." "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!"

MEDITATION CXV.

ZEAL FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD IN THE HEART OF THE GOOD PRIEST IS A FIRE WHICH CONSUMES IT.

"The zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up." (John, ii. 17.)

1.—*Motives of this Zeal.*
2.—*Qualities of this Zeal.*

First Point.—Motives which enkindle our zeal to honor our churches. If we go back in spirit to the day of that solemn and awful promulgation from the Mount of Sinai, we shall hear among the other commandments this one: "Reverence my sanctuary; I am the Lord." What majesty in these words! We know what details the Almighty God Himself deigned to give, what precautions He saw fit to take, in order to secure for that tabernacle of old the reverence due to it, to protect it from the slightest profanation, and with what severity He punished the least transgressions of His law in that respect.

The tabernacle, it is true, was holy, but was it as holy as our churches? We know also what indignation Our Lord displayed against the profaners of the Temple of Jerusalem. He was meekness itself, and yet He takes up a scourge, casts out of the Temple those who sold therein the victims destined for the sacrifices, and overturns the tables of the money-changers saying: "My house is the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves." (Luke, xix. 46.) Of Him the prophet had foretold that He would

not quench the smoking flax, and yet on two distinct occasions He displayed a holy indignation against the profaners of His house, one at the beginning and the other at the end of His public life. The Church has the history of this extraordinary episode read to us three times in the year in the Gospels of the Mass. Does she not intend thereby to give priests a lesson of zeal for the honor of the house of God?

Many other evidences, too, does the Church give of her desire to see the temples of God honored and respected. If, in her councils, she has sometimes praised those who, like Nepotian, distinguished themselves by their zeal for the honor of God's house: *Erat sollicitus si niteret altare, si parietes absque fuligine, si pavimenta tersa, si sacrarium mundum, si vasa luculenta,* she has also, on the other hand, severely reprimanded priests who could find neither time nor means to keep their churches in becoming order, while luxury abounded in their homes.

In order to stimulate ourselves to greater zeal in this respect, it will surely suffice to call to mind the two principal obligations of our sacerdotal state, namely, the glorification of God and the saving of souls.

The Lord has made us stewards of His household, and charged us with whatever tends to His glory. We are, therefore, bound to leave nothing undone to have Him reverenced in His own sanctuary, and to suffer no profanation of the sacred place. "Priests," says the pious bishop of Agen, "being officers of the crown, are under special obligations not only to honor the divine King, but also to procure for Him due respect and reverence from others." Again, if we have really at heart the salvation of others, we will do all in our power to draw them to the Church, to make them love the Church, wherein alone they can draw from all the fountains of grace. They will undoubtedly be attracted to the Church, and they will love it if they are pleased and satisfied there. This they can hardly fail to be if the church is properly kept, becomingly decorated, and, as much as circumstances will permit, made a fit abiding-place for the majesty of God which dwells therein. It is not unfrequently, then, that the beginning and the end of the reformation of a parish is accomplished. But if the pastor is not animated by holy zeal, the contrary will inevitably result.

Second Point.—Qualities of zeal for reverence toward our churches. Like all zeal this ought to be active and prudent, courageous and constant.

Fire always gives heat; wherever there is fire, its presence can be felt. "He maketh His ministers flames of fire." (Heb. i. 7.)

But it is not alone in the neatness and decorum of his church that the zealous priest shows his love for the beauty of God's house. "Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house." But he leaves nothing undone to have Him honored whom the angels praise, the dominations adore, and in whose presence all the powers of heaven tremble. He never rests, he is never satisfied until all abuses and irreverences are banished from that sacred place. The more crying the scandal, the more is his zeal enkindled. The very obstacles which it encounters serve but to inflame it the more. If he succeed not to the full measure of his desires, his troubled soul bewails it before God. Like the prophet, he is dry with weeping: *Tabescere me fecit zelus meus;* or with St. Augustine he says: *Quae forte ibi perverse viderit, satagit emendare, cupit corrigere, non quiescit. Si emendare non potest, tolerat, gemit.*" (St. Aug.) St. John Chrysostom, inveighing energetically against irreverences committed in the house of God, declared that he was afraid a thunderbolt from heaven would crush him if he did not prevent them by all the means in his power.

But let us not forget that here, as in other things, we preach most effectually by our own good example. The people believe their eyes rather than their ears. Example throws a flood of light on things which words may only obscure. We should never appear in the sanctuary without being penetrated with a religious awe. St. Thomas, in order to excite this veneration in himself, was wont to say to Our Lord, when in the presence of the Holy Eucharist: *Judex crederis esse venturus.* Who does not know that the sight of a good priest prostrate before the tabernacle, entirely absorbed in profound recollection, has been the means which Providence not unfrequently employed to convince unbelievers and to convert great sinners? O what a beautiful thing it is to need only to be seen in order to be useful! *Quam pulchrum est ut videaris et prosis!* (St. Amb.)

O Lord, I desire to seriously consider and, with the help of Thy grace, faithfully practise what Thou hast deigned to say to me by the lips of a priest—one according to Thine own heart:

Pave ad sanctuarium meum, fili; videat te populus meus paventem, et paveat ipse. . . . Locus iste terribilis est; time ergo quando ingrederis, et tremore concutiantur ossa tua. . . . Dum celebras, dum divina officia peragis, dum sacramenta ministras videat et miretur populus reverentiam et decentiam tuam in cultu meo: et sic ad pietatem excitetur. Nil in situ, in motu, in incessu, in voce appareat nisi modestia, gravitate, humilitate, dignitate et religione plenum. . . . O si populus videret faciem tuam tamquam faciem Angeli, sicut olim in

Stephano visa est! qualiter mysteria mea veneraretur et coleret. (Mem. vit. Sac.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Motives of sacerdotal zeal for the honor of churches. "Reverence My sanctuary. I am the Lord." What majesty in those words of the Lord, promulgating His law on Mount Sinai! We know all He had prescribed in order to secure for the tabernacle the respect due to it. This building was really holy, not, however, so holy as our churches! Our Lord, who was meekness itself, cast out of the Temple those who profaned it. The Church, which is ever guided by the Holy Ghost, has not neglected anything which might cause the house of God to be respected. In her councils she has praised the zeal of fervent priests and blamed severely those who were negligent in the care of their churches. The end of the priesthood is to glorify God and to save men. The Lord has confided to me the interests of His glory. I should, therefore, cause Him to be respected in His dwelling; I should honor Him myself, and have others render to Him the homages due to Him. I must attract my brethren to the Church where all the fountains of grace are open for them as for all the faithful servants of God.

Second Point.—Qualities of zeal for the honor of churches. Fire is never without heat. A priest zealous for the honor of his church takes no rest until he has banished all scandal and improprieties from it. St. Chrysostom feared God's displeasure if he did not do everything in his power to prevent sacrilege. In this let us preach principally by example. Let us, when we appear in the sanctuary, feel a religious awe. We are under the eyes of Him "whom angels praise, dominations adore, whose presence causes the powers to tremble." Let us always be profoundly recollected and this feeling will pass from us to the faithful.

PROPER OF THE SAINTS.

June 16.—St. John Francis Regis.

MEDITATION CXVI.

ZEAL OF THE SAINT.

In the life of this man of God, just as in the life of St. Francis Xavier—whom he had chosen for his model—all breathes the most ardent charity and the greatest zeal for the salvation of souls.

He displayed as much devotedness laboring in our midst, as did the great St. Francis Xavier for the conversion of nations in the Indies. The mission of both lasted but ten years, yet in that brief time what a grand career they ran! The Church has sketched the portrait of St. Francis Regis for us in the prayer proper to his feast. Clement XI., who declared him "blessed," and who invoked his name with particular confidence, composed that prayer himself: "O God, who didst adorn Thy confessor, blessed John Francis, with wonderful charity and an invincible patience, to endure great hardships for the salvation of souls, mercifully grant that, instructed by his example, and aided by his intercession, we may obtain the reward of everlasting life." Let us consider these two points:

1.—*The Ardor of His Charity.*
2.—*His Patience.*

First Point.—Ardent charity of St. Francis Regis. Every man has his ambition. St. Francis Regis seems to have had no other than to love God and to cause Him to be loved. When yet but a student, he set himself to improving the morals of his fellow-students. His first efforts were so successful that he won many of them to Jesus Christ. When he had become professor, he often excited in the minds of his pupils a desire to meditate on things eternal, and he availed himself of every opportunity to inspire them with horror for sin. One day, when one of them had committed some grievous fault, he spoke to them of the judgment of God with so much force that they were seized with terror; and some of them afterward state how the same feeling of awe and fear came over them every time they thought of what he had said on that occasion. That was, as it were, the prelude to his apostolic life, which began with his missions.

As soon as this field was open to his zeal, he might be likened to another Elias: "Elias, the prophet, stood up as a fire, and his word burnt like a torch." (Ecclus. xlviii. 1.) Henceforth he had but one desire, one occupation—to glorify God by the sanctification of souls. To that he devoted every moment of his time, alike in city and in country, in churches, prisons, hospitals, in private and public life. When preaching, he first laid down some Christian truth lucidly and forcibly; then he drew therefrom its moral consequences, and finally, by his pathetic appeals, carried his audience with him. His discourses were delivered with such vehemence that his voice often failed him. Often, also, his face was aglow; he was himself so much moved by what he said, and he spoke

with so much unction and fervor, that generally both the preacher and his hearers were melted to tears.

Unmindful of all else, he was zealous only in the cause of God and of souls. Once, having used all his endeavors to convert a sinner, and finding his efforts of no avail, with tears he besought the sinner, saying: "I conjure you, plunge your sword into my heart if you will, but cease offending your Creator." He declared to one of his friends that life would be unbearable if it did not afford him the opportunity to labor for the welfare of souls and extend the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Never did his charity experience that alteration of fervor and tepidity which even the best priests sometimes have to lament. The fire which consumed him increased in intensity till his last breath. In his forty-fourth year he fell seriously ill, and began to realize that his end was near. But he had announced a mission at La Lamesque. A great multitude flocked thither from all parts to hear the word of God. St. Francis Regis hastened whither duty called him and where death awaited him. He arrived completely exhausted, and, without rest, began the fatiguing work of the mission. His illness increased, but he redoubled his labors. At last nature succumbed. He was carried, against his will, to a poor cottage; there on his pallet he continued to hear the confessions not yet completed, made new penitents, and died in the actual exercise of his ministry. What wonder that when about to yield his soul into the hands of his Creator, turning toward his attendant, he exclaimed: "O dear brother, how happy and contented I die!"

It is with this serene contentment and joy that clergymen whose lives are indeed blameless before men, but without fruit before God, shall look upon the face of approaching death? They do not give scandal; but do they do the good they ought? The harvest needs laborers, indefatigable workers. Are there enough of them? Let us consider the lament of St. Gregory, and fear lest it apply to us: *Ad messem multam operarii pauci sunt, quod sine gravi maerore loqui non possumus. . . . Ecce mundus sacerdotibus plenus est, sed tamen in messe Dei rarus valde reperitur operator: quia officium quidem sacerdotale suscepimus, sed opus officii non implemus. . . . Relinquunt Deum hi qui nobis commissi sunt, et tacemus; in pravis actibus jacent, et correptionis manum non tendimus; quotidie per multas nequitias pereunt, et eos ad infernum tendere negligenter videmus.* (In Ev., i, I hom. xvii.)

Second Point.—Invincible patience of St. Francis Regis. St. Paul tells us that patience is the first fruit of charity: *Charitas patiens est* (1 Cor. xiii. 4), and St. James says that it is the perfection of all virtues: *Patientia opus perfectum habet.* (James, i,

4.) Certain it is that patience is the source of merit, and that charity itself derives all its value, not from the words which express it, but from the works which prove it by the more or less painful sacrifices which they entail: *Non diligamus verbo neque lingua sed opere et veritate.* "Let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (1 John, iii. 18.) There is no virtue more necessary for a pastor than this, because of his many cares, his incessant labors, and the difficulties which he has almost always to encounter in the accomplishment of his designs. The good priest fights against all bad passions, and all bad passions fight against him. Co-operating with Jesus Christ in the great work of Redemption, the good priest ought to be, like his Master, a man of sorrows, and like Him, too, a man of patience. Such was St. Francis, the apostle of Vivarais and Velay.

He had requested to be sent on the mission to Canada, with the hope of there shedding his blood for Jesus Christ. His request was not granted, but it may be truly said that his ministry in Languedoc was a continual martyrdom. He might be seen in the depth of winter, in the wildest regions, climbing precipitous mountains, crossing impetuous torrents, crawling on hands and knees on the edge of frightful precipices. Sometimes, while traversing forests, he would stop to preach to the multitude gathered there eager to hear him, or would climb a rock or a mound of frozen snow, and thence distribute to the people the bread of the word of God. He rested from preaching only to take up the work of confessions, in which he labored oftentimes far into the night.

But more admirable still was his patience under the outrages and ill-treatments he endured without the least resentment in his heart, or the slightest shadow of displeasure. One day some one expressed sympathy with him because of the indignity he suffered by being publicly beaten. He answered: "Is it, after all, such a wonderful thing to endure a blow for the love of Jesus Christ? One can not be a true disciple of so good a Master without rejoicing when he has to suffer some insult for his Master's sake." When most odious calumnies were spread against him, he never tried to prove his innocence, though nothing was easier; and when his friends would take up his defence, he besought them to keep silent, lest he might lose such an excellent opportunity to suffer ignominy like the Saviour. More than once he was attacked by wicked men, who, not satisfied with insulting him, felled him to the ground, trampled him under foot, and left him for dead. St. Francis prayed for them. On one such occasion he exclaimed: "How sweet to me to suffer a little for the sake of souls whose salvation cost the Son of God so much suffering."

Yet his apostolic heart felt nothing so keenly as to be opposed in his labors, especially by those from whom he might have expected encouragement and protection. One of his superiors ordered him to discontinue some of his works, and in others confined his zeal to narrower limits. The saint submitted, without a murmur, to an inactivity a thousand times more painful than the severest labors of his ministry. He showed the same invincible patience on another occasion well worth recording. A pious bishop invited the holy missionary to come and labor in his diocese. At first the bishop was highly pleased at the success of the mission, but in the end unwittingly adopted the views of the enemies of the saint. Francis was summoned before him, accused of indiscretions, and was about to be dismissed in disgrace from the diocese. The humbled priest cast himself on his knees before the prelate, said not one word to refute the slander, attributed to his sins only the misfortune of being dismissed from a mission for the success of which he would willingly have shed the last drop of his blood. It was then that the bishop's eyes were opened, that he discovered the wiles of the enemies of religion, and became more than ever the admirer of such heroic patience.

It was, O Jesus, in the remembrance of Thy sufferings and out of the greatness of his love for Thee that this holy priest, whom I ardently desire to imitate, derived so much strength and courage. Draw my heart, I beseech Thee, to meditate longingly and lovingly on the mystery of Thy holy cross. I will love Thee henceforth, and shall account it my greatest delight to give to Thee, and to myself also, the best evidence of that love by cheerfully suffering and immolating myself for Thee: *Utrumque es nobis, Domine Jesus, et speculum patienti et praemium patientis; utrumque fortiter provocat ac vehementer accendit.* (St. Ber. serm. xlvii., in Cant.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Ardent charity of St. Francis Regis. Regis seemed to have only one ambition, to love God and to make Him loved by others. While yet a student or professor, he was already an apostle. As soon as he has become a missionary, he sets no bounds to his zeal. In the cities, in the country, in the churches, on public squares, everywhere he goes in search of souls. God and souls, these are all he sees. During his last sickness he continues the work of confessions already commenced. He hears new penitents and dies in the exercise of zeal.

Second Point.— His patience. His ministry in the missions was but a prolonged martyrdom. His patience was most admira-

ble in the ill-treatments which he endured. "It seems to me," he said, "that one can not call himself a disciple of Jesus Christ who does not rejoice in the affronts he suffers for Him." It was, O Jesus, in remembrance of Thy sufferings and in his ardent love for Thee that this holy priest found so much strength and courage; attract my heart to Thee, give it grace to love to meditate on Thy Passion, and fill it with Thy love.

June 21.—St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

MEDITATION CXVII.

THE SAINT'S ANGELIC PURITY.

1.—*His Innocence.*
2.—*His Penitence.*

It is a mistake to suppose that these two virtues mutually exclude each other, and that the latter is out of place wherever the former is found. The Church holds up both to equal admiration in the person of St. Aloysius, and from their union sketches the special character of his sanctity. Both are equally necessary for priests and pastors. (Or. diei.) We continue the work of Jesus Christ, being with Him mediators and public penitents; our duty is to appease God's anger and disarm His justice. But how can we perform that duty if we are not God's friends? *Si non places, non placas,* says St. Bernard, but it is purity that confers on us that glorious privilege. "He that loveth cleanness of heart shall have the King for his Friend." (Prov. xxii. 11.) Though not elevated to the dignity of the priesthood, the youthful St. Aloysius may, nevertheless, be proposed to us as an excellent model.

First Point.—Innocence of St. Aloysius. Its perfection. Its reward.

I. The Church calls this amiable saint by the beautiful title of "angelic youth." Was there ever another who, by purity of body and soul, approached nearer the nature of angels? As soon as he had come to the age of discretion, prompted by the pious teachings of his saintly mother, he applied to himself these words of Holy Writ: "My son, flee from sin as from the face of a serpent." "With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issues out from it." "Abstain from all appearance of evil." Hence, from his tenderest age, he was noted for his horror of sin and of all that might lead to it. What consternation filled his soul at the thought that he

had offended God by taking a little powder from soldiers, and by repeating some improper words which he had heard from them, but did not understand! He was then only four years of age. Three years later, when he made his general confession, so intense was his contrition that he fainted away. When they wished to console him, he exclaimed: "Ah, God is so good, and I have offended Him grievously." He looked upon himself as the greatest of sinners. He wept bitterly over what he called his disorders, and what St. Charles Borromeo would hardly call slight imperfections.

This pure life St. Aloysius led in the court of princes, where was to be found everything calculated to dazzle the eye, to flatter the senses, and to pervert the heart. But his virtue was proof against every evil. Moses in the desert saw the strange spectacle of a bush burning without being consumed. He said to himself: "I will go and see this great sight." Behold a still more wonderful phenomenon, a young man encompassed by the flames of all passions emerges unscathed. O how good it is to bear the yoke of virtue from youth! How happy the lot of those who walk in the way of perfect innocence! "Blessed are the undefiled in the way." (Ps. cxviii. 1.)

II. "Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle? or who shall rest in Thy holy hill? He that walketh without blemish and worketh justice." (Ps. xiv. 1, 2.) St. Aloysius, the rival of angels in purity, almost equaled them in the happiness of his saintly life. Ever absorbed in seraphic contemplation, he enjoyed the sweetest intercourse with the Spouse of virgins. At an age when other children can hardly be taught to lisp a few prayers, he had already attained a sublime degree of perfection in prayer. One day his director expressed astonishment that he could spend one whole hour in prayer without the slightest distraction. "I am more astonished," replied St. Aloysius, "that any one in the holy presence of God can think of anything else." Hence, doubtless, that serenity of soul which the Scripture compares to a continual banquet. (Prov. xvi. 15.)

But, after all, it is in heaven alone that purity receives its great, its incomparable reward. Who will grant us there to behold St. Aloysius of Gonzaga? That favor having been granted for a moment to St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, she cried out in a transport of admiration: "O how dazzling is the glory of St. Aloysius, son of Ignatius! I could not have believed it if my Lord Jesus had not shown it to me. I would fain travel the world over and proclaim everywhere that he is a great saint. During his life he kept his heart open to the eyes of God. That is why he is now crowned

with such dazzling glory. He was a hidden martyr; for to him who loves Thee, O Lord, what martyrdom it is, not to be capable of loving Thee as much as he desires and as Thou deservest!"

Second Point.—Penitence of St. Aloysius. The Church, in her tender solicitude for the salvation of her children, counts less on innocence preserved than on innocence recovered. Hence, hardly daring to propose to our imitation the angelic purity of St. Aloysius—too much does it appear a miracle of grace—she earnestly entreats us to follow him at least in the path of penance. (*Innocentem non secuti, poenitentem imitemur.*) Moreover, purity, which leads to the sight of God, necessarily leads to His love, and the spirit of sacrifice is inseparable from ardent charity. To love God and to hate one's self in a saintly way are but one and the same thing in the language of the Gospel. O Lord, what is impossible to a heart devoted to Thee, when Thy grace sustains and animates it? St. Aloysius knew the use of austerities from his tenderest years, and continued them to the moment of his death. Sensuality itself is less ingenious in devising the means to gratify its desires than he was in finding ways to mortify himself and to suffer.

In vain do we say that God does not require of us the austerities which we so admire in the saints. It is none the less true that we have sins to atone for; that to belong to Jesus Christ not only as priest, but even as a mere Christian, we must crucify our flesh with its vices and concupiscences; that there is a mortification of the heart strictly and continually obligatory, according to the Council of Trent: "The whole life of a Christian should be a perpetual penance." We know, moreover, that we shall have to answer for all the souls confided to our care; that we are bound, not only to instruct them, to correct them, to pray for them, but also help atone for their sins. A penitent without being a sinner, such was St. Aloysius; sinners without being penitents, such are we. Conscience compels the avowal; but can we admit it without trembling?

Dear saint, severe toward thyself alone, thou didst always bear in thy heart a compassion for thy brethren, generous even to the sacrifice of thy life! Have pity on us! If it has not been given thee, according to the generous impulses of thy zeal, to follow the career of the apostles, God seems to have made it up to thee by the graces of mercy and salvation which He bestows upon those who invoke thee. Help us to make up for the many precious years which we have wasted. Thy charity is ever the same, and thy power is greater in heaven than upon earth. Obtain for us a sincere love of innocence and penitence, so that we, too, may have

the happiness to see God and with thee possess Him in the kingdom of glory.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Innocence of St. Aloysius. Its perfection. Its reward. From his most tender age he applied to himself these words of the Scripture: "My son, flee from sin as from the face of a serpent.' "With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issues out of it." "Abstain from all appearance of evil." He had a horror for sin and for everything which might lead to it, and was entirely detached from every creature. Because of some unbecoming words which he had repeated without understanding them, he considered himself a great sinner, and wept bitterly over them. This holy life he led in the very court of princes, where everything is a snare for virtue. Hence, how sweet and intimate his communications with God! The privilege of the pure soul is to have the King of kings for its friend; is there another friendship as fruitful in solid consolation? The angelic purity of St. Aloysius has already been rewarded on earth; who can tell how magnificently it has been rewarded in heaven?

Second Point.—Penitence of St. Aloysius. Perfect innocence inspires one with the love of God and the spirit of sacrifice. St. Aloysius adopted the use of the discipline from his tender years and continued it to the moment of his death. Never was sensuality as ingenious to procure pleasures as this saint to find occasions to mortify himself and to suffer. Will I dare compare myself to this model? Louis was penitent though sinless; I am a sinner without doing penance.

June 24.—Nativity of St. John the Baptist.

MEDITATION CXVIII.

THE MISSION OF THE SAINT.

An angel pronounced the most magnificent eulogy on this saint in saying: "He shall be great before the Lord." (Luke, i. 15.) He shall be great, not in his own estimation, not merely in the esteem of men, but before God. But whence shall he derive all that greatness? Solely from the Messias, whom he shall precede in the spirit and virtue of Elias, and for whom he shall prepare the way. John the Baptist is predestined and consecrated for the

work of Jesus Christ. His birth and his life, his preachings and his actions, his glories and his virtues, all relate to Jesus Christ as their center, and it is especially in this respect that he becomes to us a beautiful subject for sacerdotal meditation. He reminds us of the end for which we are priests, and by his example encourages us to faithfully fulfil it.

1.—*He was all for Jesus Christ.*
2.—*He was all Jesus Christ's.*

First Point.—In the person of St. John the Baptist, all was for Jesus Christ—the ministry intrusted to him and the graces which he received. To make known the Incarnate Son of God, and thereby lay the foundation of His kingdom on earth, was the vocation of St. John the Baptist. At the very moment of his nativity, his father, prophetically inspired, exclaimed: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel!" The days of His great mercy have come. They began with thine, O blessed child! and the Messias only awaits thy voice to proclaim His appearance. John the Baptist is not the Light which shall save the world, but he was born to show that Light to the world. Of him Jesus will receive, not His mission, but testimony to His mission.

The servant will draw attention to the Master, and will put Him, so to speak, in possession of His title of Saviour: "Behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world." (John, i. 29.) Is there a more sublime ministry? Does it not suffice to justify the word of the angel: "He shall be great," and the words of Jesus Himself: "There was not a greater born of woman"? O Priest of God, recognize your greatness in that of the Baptist! He is the man of Jesus Christ, commissioned to manifest Him to the world, and to open for Him the way to the hearts of men. Is not that also your glorious vocation? Was it for any other purpose that God called you while yet in your mother's womb, and chose you from all eternity?

In order to enable the precursor to fulfil his sublime ministry, Jesus Christ gives such authority to his mission as to convince all minds; and an authority of virtue and of sanctity capable of touching all hearts.

His nativity is accompanied by so many miracles that he shall have no need to perform others to establish the truth of his testimony. Zachary, detained in the sanctuary by a heavenly apparition, the joyful tidings which he hears, the sign which is given him and which is also the punishment of his wavering faith, the sudden loss of his speech, and its recovery at the birth of the child

to sing the glory of the coming Messias, and the destiny of his newborn son—these are some of the signs which, at his birth, attested the mission of the Baptist.

The report of all these wonderful events spread into neighboring countries, and produced a profound impression. "And fear came upon all their neighbors; and all these things were divulged over all the mountainous country of Judea. And all they who had heard them, laid them up in their heart saying: What an one, think ye, shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him." (Luke, i. 65, 66.) John the Baptist is no sooner born than he is known and respected as the messenger of God.

But it was not enough to convince minds, it was also necessary to move hearts, to free them from the slavery of evil passions and to lead them to Jesus Christ. To gain that end, the precursor of the Messias needed extraordinary graces. He required a sanctity at once dazzling and marvelous to attract attention and admiration! That sanctity the Baptist evidently possessed. At a very early age he retired to the desert, *Erat in desertis*, and there dwelt until the day of his manifestation to Israel. What manner of life was his during that long solitude in the wilderness? Continual conversation with God and the practice of the most rigorous penance. Had he any crimes to expiate? None; he had been sanctified from his mother's womb, and as he advanced in years "he was strengthened in spirit." He appeased the justice of God in behalf of sinners to whom he was to announce the coming Messias.

Therefore, everything connected with the Baptist, his person, his ministry, the extraordinary graces conferred on him, had a special relation to Jesus Christ. Providence, in all its care and solicitude for him, had but one end in view, to enable him to act efficaciously on the minds and hearts of men, and to prepare the way for the establishment therein of the reign of Jesus Christ. It is also precisely what God had in view in calling us to and preparing us for the priesthood, and in lavishing upon us so many means of sanctification. All the extraordinary graces bestowed on us during our education, in our ordination, and since our elevation to the priesthood have but one object, to make us saints and worthy ministers of Jesus Christ. O my God, would that I had responded to the designs of Thy grace as did Thy precursor!

Second Point.—In the person of St. John the Baptist all was Jesus Christ's. As he had received no other mission than to give testimony to the Messias, so he did nothing but render that testimony. *Hic venit in testimonium, ut testimonium perhiberet.* (John, i. 7.) To that he consecrated his whole life, and in that he is the perfect model of all apostolic men. The fire of zeal burns in his

heart, an eminent sanctity shines forth in all his actions. He terrifies by his threats, he persuades by his example, he enlightens by his instructions, he edifies by his humility, he sustains the honor of his ministry by invincible firmness. All these characteristics ought, to a certain extent, be found in us if we really possess the true spirit of the priesthood.

John the Baptist preached by his appearance alone. Before he opened his mouth, his ascetic face, his austerity conveyed the impression that he was thoroughly convinced of the necessity of penance. When a man has been thirty years preparing himself to receive his ministry of precursor, he has a right to say to others: *Parate viam Domini;* "prepare ye the way of the Lord."

In order the more efficaciously to exhort people to penance, he struck terror into their souls, being well convinced that fear is generally the most powerful check on bad passions, and the best incentive to good: "Ye brood of vipers," he exclaims, "who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruit worthy of penance.... For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every one, therefore, that yieldeth not good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire." (Matt. iii.)

But if his menaces are so terrifying, his moral precepts are full of wisdom and moderation. They are accommodated to every condition of life. To the rich, who ask him what they must do to be saved, he does not say, "give up your riches," but, "give alms of what remaineth." Of the same moderation are his instructions to soldiers and publicans. Ever exact, he never exaggerates.

His labors are crowned with unheard-of success. He is taken for Elias, or for one of the ancient prophets risen from the dead. It is supposed even that he is the promised Messias Himself. Far from glorying in such a reputation, he only finds in it the opportunity for self-abasement and the assertion of his own nothingness. *Ego vox clamantis in deserto.* How great the agitation of his humble heart when Jesus asks to be baptized at his hands. What sorrow rent his soul, when some zealous disciples complained to him: "Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond the Jordan ... behold, He baptizeth, and all men come to Him." (John, iii. 26): "know ye not," he answered, "that He must increase, but I must decrease." (John, iii. 30.) Oh, how rare it is to find humility in the glory of great success! Vanity is a vice of which preachers are often accused—does it not seem that they are accused of it every time they are praised?

John the Baptist preached the truth on the banks of the Jordan, and he will preach it also before the whole court. He will proclaim even to the very ear of the King these intrepid words: *Non*

licet. "It is not lawful for thee." He attacks scandal with intrepidity. He is cast into prison; he is put to death. Is there any reward more worthy of the ambition of a faithful minister? Living and dying, the precursor of Jesus Christ gives testimony of his Master. He gave all that he was and all that he had to Jesus Christ.

Amiable Saviour, Thou dost desire now, as then, to enter into souls and bring them peace and salvation. Send, therefore, other holy precursors to prepare Thy way before Thee. Make all Thy priests like St. John the Baptist—burning and shining lights, so that they may unite to the life which enlighteneth the charity which inflameth. *Tantum lucere vanum, tantum ardere parum, ardere et lucere perfectum.* (St. Bern. serm. in Nat. St. Joan. B.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—In the person of St. John the Baptist all is for Jesus Christ—the ministries confided to him, the graces bestowed on him.

I. He is called to make the Saviour known, and to lay the foundation of His kingdom here below. This his father foretold at the moment of his birth. This child shall not be the light of the world; but he is born in the world in order to make it known. O Priest of God, recognize your greatness in the greatness of St. John the Baptist. His mission is yours.

II. In order to accomplish his ministry, he had need of extraordinary graces: these were granted to him. The wonders which accompanied his nativity, the eminent holiness of his life, enabled him to act with efficacy upon the minds and hearts of men. All the graces lavished upon me up to this day were given me for one object; that I might become a saint, and be qualified to lead others unto sanctity. Have I, O Jesus, responded to Thy designs as faithfully as Thy precursor?

Second Point.— In the person of John the Baptist everything is Jesus Christ's. He was sent on earth for Him alone; he does not save for Him. He enlightens by his instructions, persuades by his examples, edifies by his humility, sustains the honor of his ministry by his invincible firmness. Living and dying, he is the witness of Jesus Christ. *Lucere vanum, ardere parum, ardere et lucere perfectum.*

June 29.—St. Peter, Apostle.

MEDITATION CXIX.

CHRIST APPOINTS HIM HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons.*
2.—*Hear the Words.*
3.—*Consider the Actions.*

First Prelude.—"After they had eaten, Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?" Questioned thrice by the Saviour, Peter thrice answers that he loves Him, and receives from Him the charge of governing the whole Church. Then his Master foretells to Peter by what death he would glorify Him.

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the shore of Tiberias, and, gathered around Jesus, the apostles who had just partaken of the food He had prepared for them.

Third Prelude.—Ask of God the grace to fully understand the meaning of the words addressed to St. Peter on that occasion, and to enter into the dispositions of the holy apostle.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. These are the disciples who had fruitlessly labored with Peter throughout the night, who now recognize Jesus by His power and goodness, but who fear to tell Him so. Their joy is restrained by awe, and this awe heightens the sweetness of their joy by calming it. They study His looks, His whole exterior, and lose none of His words; not one of them seems either surprised or jealous at his honoring Peter more than the others. They had already heard Him making Peter this promise: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church." It is Peter, whose heart, overwhelmed with grief and shame, needs consolation by some manifestation of His love. The more Jesus seems to have forgotten his crime, the more he himself reflects upon it. Note the expression of sorrow which his features assume when the Saviour puts that question to him for the third time. Contemplate the Son of God risen from the dead, who comes to comfort His apostles, to confirm them in their faith, their hope, their love. He reads in the soul of Peter a desire to atone for his fall. With what touching delicacy He provides the occasion, while at the same time He instructs all pastors of

His Church, revealing to them His tender solicitude for the salvation of souls.

Second and Third Points.—Hear the words and consider the actions. As He was soon to leave the world and return to His Father, the hour had come for the Redeemer to invest with supreme authority the apostle whom He had chosen to be His visible representative upon earth. But He would have it well understood that this pre-eminence of dignity and of power is granted to only a pre-eminence of love. In presence of the other disciples who had just finished their repast, He says to Peter: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?" Peter answers: "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Jesus continues: "Feed My lambs." It meant for Peter, and for all those who, in the Church, exercise the office of pastor of souls, "Learn how dear those souls are to Me! The best proof that you can give Me of your love is to teach them, to guide them, and to save them. In this office you will need great patience, meekness, self-abnegation; but you shall have all that if you love Me, and nothing but your love for Me can secure it for you." In effect, what is the life of a true pastor but a life of prayer, and study, and labor, and devotedness to duty, and frequent occasions for sufferings? But in order to persevere in this life of self-denial, we must be sustained by that energy which springs from charity.

The answer of Peter is a humble one. He does not say "Thou knowest that I love Thee more than the others." He is satisfied to assert his love. Since his fall he mistrusts himself, and is careful not to prefer himself to any one. O my God, when shall I profit by the lessons which my weakness continually teaches me! Alas, how far I am from such a disposition! It would even seem that my pride increases in proportion as I have the best reasons to become humble.

Jesus does not stop at a first question. He questions His apostle a second and a third time. Does He not know that He will trouble the heart of Peter? He knows it, but a triple protestation of attachment is necessary to expiate a triple denial: *Ne minus amori lingua serviat quam timori.* (St. Aug.) Those who are called to the direction of souls must be taught that the duties of that office mean something more than little outbursts of devotion; that they require a generous love, a charity full of zeal and of constancy. After the moment of painful trial for the penitent apostle, Jesus lavishes favors on him. He does not say simply as before: "Feed My lambs," but He adds: "Feed My sheep." Lambs and sheep, pastors and people, the whole Church, all are confided to his care. The charge laid upon him is the reward of his love; the zeal with which

he will discharge the duties of that high office will be another proof of that love. Nor is it the innocent love of John that is elevated to that sublime dignity; it is the repentant love of Peter. Thus, O Lord, Thou dost treat a great sinner! Why, then, should I lose courage at the thought of my sins!

In appointing Peter visible head of the universal Church, what does the Saviour promise and foretell him? Persecutions, martyrdom, the death of the cross. "Amen, amen, I say to thee, when thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst." Before the care of souls was confided to us we could have enjoyed a certain degree of liberty; that liberty we enjoy not since we became pastors. We now belong to our flock. We owe them all our time, our whole existence. Before that we had only our own little burdens to bear, now we have to endure our own and our people's sufferings. "When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not. And this, he said, signifying by what death he should glorify God." (John, xxi. 18, 19.) This rope wherewith Peter was to be bound, and the violence which was to be done him, indicated the chains with which he was to be loaded, the tortures he should suffer; those outstretched hands symbolized the kind of death he was to die. But, do good pastors and martyrs really go to the stake and to the cross against their will? By the impulse of grace they desire them; by the impulse of nature they shrink from them. Who is he, asks St. Augustine, who loves affliction and pain? Therefore, O Lord, Thou dost not command us to love them, but only to suffer them.

To love souls, and to love Jesus Christ in souls, to the loss of rest, of health, and even of life itself. "I shall spend myself and be spent for your souls;" that is the example which the apostles and all truly apostolic men have left us. O Jesus, give us the grace to honor so lovely and so admirable a vocation; to always follow Thee whithersoever it may please Thee to lead us, without hesitating because of the unwillingness of our nature; always ready to glorify Thee by our life and by our death, ever happy if we are called upon to sacrifice either to the love of Thee.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Behold the persons. They are the disciples who shared with St. Peter the fruitless labors of the night, and who rejoice with him for the miraculous fishing. We see Peter, whose heart, oppressed with grief, feels the want of alleviating it by some exterior manifestation of his love. Behold Jesus Christ reading in the heart of Peter the desire to atone for his triple denial.

Second and Third Points. — Hear the words, consider the actions. For the Saviour, the hour has come to invest with supreme authority the disciple whom He has chosen to be His vicegerent. He questions Peter concerning his love, and, as an evidence of it, demands of him that he consecrate himself entirely to the salvation of souls. The answer is humble. Peter contents himself with offering his love; does not prefer himself to any one. Jesus does not stop after the first question, and though He will afflict the heart of Peter, asks for a triple declaration of repentance and love. The declaration is made. As a reward of it the Saviour confides to a great sinner the care of His whole Church, of lambs and of sheep. Why should I become discouraged at the remembrance of my sins? To love souls, and Jesus Christ in the souls of men, is the example left to my imitation by apostles and men really apostolic.

July 2.— Visitation of the Blessed Virgin.

MEDITATION CXX.

CHARITY AND HUMILITY OF MARY.

This journey of Mary, going to visit Elizabeth, has been compared to that of the Son of God coming to visit human nature through the mystery of the Incarnation. Both ought to serve as models for priests in their intercourse with the people. Meditating on these two visits, we find that:

1.—*Their Motive was Charity.*
2.—*They were Performed in Humility.*
3.—*Their Aim was the Sanctification of Souls.*

First Point.—Charity is the only motive which induced the Son of God to visit mankind, and the holy Virgin to visit Elizabeth. Although the Word, Son of God, and God Himself, fills all with His immensity, yet the mystery of His Incarnation is represented by the Holy Ghost under the idea of a voyage or visit. "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world." (John, xvi. 28.) "The Orient from on high has visited us." (Luke, i. 78.) But where did the Lord get the motive for such a design? Nowhere else than in His love for man. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son" (John, iii. 16), and not only the world, but each man in particular. "Who loved me, and de-

livered Himself for me." That project was conceived in the bowels of His mercy. He could not consent to let us perish without hope; His compassion and His love triumphed over every consideration of His justice.

The same, with due allowance, may be said of the visit which the august Virgin paid on this day. As she has, so to say, but one heart and one mind with the adorable Child she carries in her womb, she also is moved by His principle of action. "If," says St. Ambrose, "she undertakes this journey, it is not because she has the least doubt as to the truth of what the angel said to her, or because she desires to satisfy herself of its reality," *Non quasi incredula de oraculo, nec quasi incerta de nuntio.* (St. Aug.) Neither is she impelled thereto by a merely natural love for those bound to her by ties of kindred. She had shown, at a very tender age, how she could separate herself from all who were near and dear to her, and it required all the power of charity to make her leave her seclusion. She wishes to congratulate Elizabeth and to rejoice with her because of the great mercies of the Lord toward her. Mary goes to offer her aid. Finally, she has to communicate the treasures of grace which God so bountifully bestowed on her; she carries the blessings of her Son to a family well prepared to receive them.

Thus all in this journey bespeaks charity. Mary went in haste and with fervor. "Mary, rising up in those days, went with haste." She was inspired with courage to surmount difficulties: neither the roughness of the road nor the height of the mountains could deter her. "She went into the mountains." Are not those the two principal qualities of divine love? *Nihil dulcius est amore, nihil fortius. Amans volat, currit, et laetatur.* (Im. l. iii. ch. v.)

Do all the journeys of priests resemble those of Jesus and Mary? Is charity always their motive? Alas, how many useless visits are made, prompted by sloth, curiosity, dislike of solitude and of a serious life! When the glory of God, or the welfare of our neighbor, requires that we should go from home, do we start promptly? Can a zealous pastor be free of anxiety when there is question of carrying to souls, of which he is the father, truth, peace, God Himself? Oh, no! He does not weigh for an instant the sacrifice of his repose, his tastes, nor even the joys of sweetest intercourse with His Lord.

Second Point.—Humility of the Son of God visiting mankind through the Incarnation, and of Mary visiting Elizabeth. Jesus Christ, impelled solely by His love for human nature, comes down from the splendors of His glory to the nothingness of our flesh. In another meditation we have considered, as it were, five different degrees by which the eternal Word, in becoming incarnate, reached

the lowest abyss of self-abasement possible even to God: *Homo factus est. Formam servi accipiens. Verbum caro factum est. In similitudinem carnis peccati. Exinanivit semetipsum.*

The Blessed Virgin, in her visit to Elizabeth, admirably imitates the humility of her Son. Humility was indeed the virtue of her life. In this circumstance, however, it seems to have attained still higher perfection. It was just at the time of her elevation to the incomprehensible dignity of Mother of God, that she calls herself servant-handmaid. "Behold the handmaid." But whose? The Lord's, *Domini.* In her visit to St. Elizabeth she makes herself a servant. She does not wait for her cousin to come to her, she takes the initiative. What wonderful humility in the silence which she keeps concerning that great event of which she alone holds the secret. The most urgent motives seem to require that she should speak. Since the Word became incarnate in her womb, should she not, for the glory of God and the consolation of Israel, proclaim that mystery which had been so long and so ardently desired? Why does she not reveal it at least to St. Joseph? Mary's wisdom, and her rule of conduct, are her own secrets. Her Son and her God humbles Himself; could she exalt herself? He hides Himself in obscurity, could she desire publicity? He is silent, she follows His example, and says not a word of the choice which heaven has made of her for the most glorious of destinies—till Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, in a transport of joy, exclaims: "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my God should come to me?" (Luke, i. 42, 43.)

Now that the secret is revealed, Mary herself will speak. It is now her duty; humility as well as gratitude call for it. She must refer to God all the honor they would do her, and reserve for herself naught but her own nothingness. "You praise me," she answers, "and you congratulate me, you extol me above all other women; as for me, I praise, bless, and glorify the Lord alone." "My soul doth magnify the Lord." I know that He, who is Almighty, hath done great things to me, and that all generations shall call me blessed. Blessed am I indeed; but why? Because "He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid." He willed to descend to the lowest degree of self-abasement; only in my misery did He find the depth of the abyss which He sought. Such are Mary's sentiments regarding herself. She looked upon herself as the most undeserving of all creatures, and hence God preferred her before all others, and elevated her to the greatest dignity. Humility is and will ever be the only way to arrive at greatness, the only solid foundation for all Christian and sacerdotal virtues,

the most essential disposition to receive God's most excellent graces and gifts; the most indispensable condition for co-operating in the great work of the Redemption of mankind.

Third Point.—The sanctification of souls is the only object of the Incarnation of Jesus, and of the visitation of Mary. Jesus Christ came upon earth solely to bring happiness as well as holiness to the world, to deliver mankind from the slavery of sin and of evil passions, to place them under the dominion of grace and peace; that is the end and aim of His coming, the fruit He would gather from His death. All the mysteries of Redemption relate to the perfection of the saints. The great object of Mary's visitation was also to purify John the Baptist, and to fill with heavenly joy the whole house of Zachary. "When Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb." (Luke, i. 41.)

O Blessed Mother, how many souls shall participate in the fruits of thy visit to the precursor of Jesus! Many are they whose sanctification thou dost provide for when thou dost co-operate to the sanctification of a priest or a pastor. Since grace already begins to flow through thy hands, the first grace we ask of thee is to make us understand how much we may rely on thy maternal mediation, and how to turn it to the best advantage. May it serve to enlighten us with the light of God's grace, as it did the Baptist and his mother, and to sanctify us by His Holy Spirit. May it serve, according to the designs of thy Son, to make us less unworthy to represent Him among men, and more faithful to fulfil the duties of our calling by procuring the salvation of our brethren.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Charity of Jesus Christ visiting the human race, and of Mary visiting Elizabeth. The mystery of the Incarnation is represented to us under the image of a visit. This project was conceived in the bowels of divine mercy. What is the motive which determines the holy Virgin to visit her cousin? She intends to congratulate her and to offer her services. She wishes to carry the blessings of her Son to a family well prepared to receive them. Do all my communications with my neighbor have the same principle and the same end? Am I prompt in sacrificing my inclinations whenever the glory of God or my neighbor's welfare demand that I should go out of the house, or leave an occupation which is pleasing to me?

Second Point.—Humility of Jesus Christ in visiting men through the Incarnation, and of Mary in visiting Elizabeth. Jesus, from the splendors of glory, descends to very nothingness. Mary, the

great Mother of God, lowers herself to the humble condition of a handmaid. She does not wait for Elizabeth, she anticipates. How great her humility in her silence respecting her honors. How great her humility in her speech.

Third Point.—The sanctification of souls is the only end of the Incarnation of the Son, and of the visitation of the Mother. To deliver men from sin, to put them under the empire of grace, to make them saints, is the fruit which Jesus desires to gather from His life and His death; and Mary desires no other fruit of her visitation save to sanctify St. John the Baptist, and through him to prepare the sanctification of many others.

July 16.—Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

MEDITATION CXXI.

THE SCAPULAR OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN.

The confraternity of the scapular was established by Mary herself, who revealed it to Blessed Simon Stock, sixth general of the Carmelites. This saint was born in 1164, of an illustrious family of England. At the age of twelve years he retired into a forest, where he practised all the austerities of the ancient solitaries. The hollow of an old oak was his dwelling, the water trickling from the rocks his drink, herbs and roots his food, prayer his occupation. He lived in this manner for twenty years, when two English nobles, returning from the Holy Land, brought with them some Religious of Mount Carmel. Simon, greatly moved by their piety toward the Queen of heaven, joined them, and six years after he was appointed general of their order.

One day, in an outburst of filial confidence, he complained to Mary of the persecutions waged against his venerable order, which seemed to be on the point of dissolution, and with tears he besought her not to forsake a religious family which she had taken under her patronage, and to give it some sign of her maternal protection. The august Virgin, encompassed by a halo of heavenly light, appeared to him, and presenting a scapular, said to him: "My son, receive this scapular as a sign of the privilege which I have obtained for thee and for the children of Carmel. Whosoever shall die invested with this habit shall be preserved from the fire of hell. It is a sign of salvation, a safeguard against peril, the special pledge of peace and protection."

The saint, full of joy, showed the precious gift he had received, not only for the Carmelites, but also for the whole Christian world.

Very soon persons very distinguished for their piety and their rank began to enter the order. St. Louis, Blanche of Castile, and the whole royal family of France, were the first to be invested with the holy habit; and the confraternity of the scapular, authorized and encouraged by the Popes, spread rapidly in every Catholic country of the world.

Half a century afterward Mary again deigned to appear, this time to Pope John XXII. She directed him to confirm and proclaim the graces, privileges, and favors which her divine Son, at her request, had granted to the Religious and confraternities of Mount Carmel, adding, that, as a compassionate Mother, she would visit purgatory every Saturday to console the souls of her children who died wearing her habit.[1]

1.—*The Devotion of the Scapular is Excellent in Itself.*
2.—*More Excellent still in the Privileges Attached to It.*
3.—*Practice of this Devotion.*

First Point.—Excellence of the devotion considered in itself. Were we to see in the scapular nothing but the thought of showing our zeal for the glory of the most holy Virgin, by wearing this habit as a testimony of our devotion to her, we should not doubt that the practice would be most pleasing to her, and a most powerful means of securing for ourselves her benevolent protection. If, after the example of the heavenly Father, who commands His sun to ripen the harvest of the sinner as well as that of the just man, Mary does good even to those who forget her or offend her, how tenderly shall the eyes of her mercy look down upon those who continually strive to show to her proofs of their love? Among all the devotions whose object is to honor the Mother of God, this one has two advantages which it is important to consider—namely, the publicity and continuity of the homage which it renders her.

I. Public homage. When I come to consecrate myself to the Mother of God, to receive solemnly at the foot of her altar the sign of my consecration to her service, to wear it in her honor all the days of my life, I am no longer satisfied to love her only in the

[1] Benedict XIV., speaking of the first of these two visions, distinctly declares that he believes in it, and that all should look upon it as a reality. He also defends the second. Many other sovereign pontiffs, in solemn judgments, thought it their duty to extol these signal favors. They have exhorted the faithful to wear the scapular, and they have recompensed with numerous indulgences this testimony of piety toward Mary. Among others, Alexander V., Clement VII., Paul III., St. Pius V., Gregory XIII., Paul V., Clement X., Innocent XI.

secret of my heart, I must make open profession of that love. Though the essence of piety is in the heart, it is none the less true that one has little devotion who is afraid to show it, and if the Saviour will be ashamed before His Father in heaven, of the cowardly Christian who is ashamed of Him before men, Mary, also, will ever make an essential distinction between the timid servant who is afraid to honor her, and the servant, who, enrolling himself under her banner, shows that he is proud of wearing her livery, proud of belonging to her, of being loyal to her as his Queen, and of loving her as his Mother.

II. Continual homage. Other pious practices are attached to certain times and to certain places; the devotion of the scapular belongs to all times and places. Thanks to my little habit, wherever I am, whatever I am doing, Mary never sees me without seeing upon my body an evidence of my devotion to her. Always and everywhere my scapular pleads for me, recommends me to her tenderness, tells her that I love her, and that I confide all my interests to her maternal care.

Second Point.—Excellence of the devotion considered in the privileges attached to it. In admitting me into her family of Carmel, Mary promises me three great favors. She will protect me in danger, she will help me to die well, she will promptly and efficaciously aid me after death. It is she herself who has assumed all these obligations in my regard.

I. She undertakes to protect me in danger, *salus in periculis.* But I allude only to the dangers of salvation. 'Tis true that on account of my vocation I have the house of God for my dwelling; but am I there sheltered from every danger? The more holy and fruitful my state of life, the more it excites the jealous anger of Satan. Yet if Mary protects me, whom have I to fear? Am I less safe in her maternal bosom than in the bosom of Abraham? How consoling the assurance she herself gives me of her protection! If it is sweet to recall to mind that she has never been invoked in vain, how much sweeter it is to hear from her own lips the assurance that she will protect me in peril, even before I shall have invoked her aid. One day I shall know what temptations she has kept from me or helped me to overcome, in consideration of this pledge of my love for her; how often, after my fall. she has preserved me from a discouragement far more fatal than my sins themselves.

II. She undertakes to save me. "Whosoever shall die invested in this habit, shall not undergo the torments of hell." When Mary takes upon herself such an astounding obligation, surpassing even my highest expectations, it is as if she were to say: As

long as I shall see you clothed in that habit which is the distinguishing mark of all my beloved children, this evidence of your affection for me will always inspire me with the most vigilant and tender love toward you. I will obtain for you such abundant graces as will make the practice of virtue easy for you, namely, time to live a good life, the occasion and the means to perform good works, constant perseverance in justice. Should you have the misfortune to incur the anger of my Son, even then, if I should see on you the symbol of alliance with me, I will not abandon you. I shall find for you in the treasures of heaven a grace so powerful that it will soften your heart and change your will. Unless you obstinately resist all my loving endeavors, compel me to expel you from my family and strip you of my livery, my kindness toward you will procure for you, that, purified by the sacraments, or by an act of perfect contrition, dying with this holy habit on, you shall not fall into the hands of God's inexorable justice.

III. Finally, Mary undertakes to effectively aid me in purgatory and to shorten the term of my expiation. She will visit, according to her own promise, the members of Carmel in that land of sorrow where they must totally expiate their imperfections. Who can doubt that this visit will bring them refreshment, light, and peace? She herself has declared it. "When they shall have quitted this life and entered into purgatory, I, their Mother, will visit them and console them the first Saturday after their death. I shall deliver thence all my children that I shall find there, and will lead them upon the holy mountain of life eternal." [1]

Third Point.—Practice of the devotion. Nothing is easier than the exercise of this devotion. I ought to try and enter into

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[1] These are the words of Mary contained in the bull of John XXII., and known under the name Sabbatine, and confirmed by many of the sovereign pontiffs, his successors.

To obtain the first privilege of the scapular and to gain the indulgences of the confraternity, as well as to have a share in the merits of the Carmelite order, it is necessary to join the confraternity, receive and wear the scapular, and have it on at the moment of death.

To have part in the privileges of the bull Sabbatine, besides the preceding conditions it is prescribed to observe chastity according to one's state of life, and to recite every day the canonical office, or the little office of the Blessed Virgin, following the Roman breviary. If one can not read, he must observe the feasts of the Church, and abstain Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, except Christmas day, should it fall on either of these days. When there is some grave impediment, the members of the confraternity are bound neither to fast, nor to recite the office, nor abstain Wednesday and Saturday. In this case, however, the faithful ought to be induced to abide by the judgment of a learned and prudent confessor, and, if necessary, obtain some commutation. (Cong. of Indul., Aug. 12, 1840; June 22, 1842, etc., P. Maurel.)

the spirit of it, and fulfil, with exactitude, all that is prescribed, either to be a member of the confraternity, or to partake of the favors attached thereto, and also be docile to the silent lessons the holy habit teaches me.

The blessed habit of the immaculate Virgin teaches me to be innocent, and to flee every occasion of sin. It is the seal of the alliance which I have entered into with her, and the particular sign of those who have adopted her as their Mother. It exhorts me to count all my footsteps, to watch over all my actions, to purify all my intentions, to leave undone nothing that would contribute to my sanctification, or to the edification of my neighbor; for it is by this that Mary recognizes her children, and discovers her own likeness in them. It is a sign of predestination and election. Therefore, when I am invested in it, I ought also to put on charity, meekness, contempt of self, modesty, justice, in one word, all that makes the saints and the elect of God.

August Virgin, I am confounded at the thought of your goodness to me, and my ingratitude toward you! How many reproaches are made to me by that precious gift which is the pledge of my reception into your Carmelite family! Ah, how many times I have dishonored it! But however unworthy I may be to call you Mother, continue, I pray you, to show yourself a mother to me That your blessed habit may always be my ornament and my defence; that I may be clothed in it at the moment of my death; that it may be to me now a habit of justice, to be one day changed into a vestment of glory and happy immortality!

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Excellence of the devotion of the scapular considered in itself. The first object of the confraternity is an open profession of our devotion to the Blessed Virgin, through the publicity and continuity of our homages. These homages are public; for we glory in wearing her livery. They are also continual, for Mary sees always upon my person the evidence of my zeal to honor her. At all times and everywhere, my scapular speaks for me to her and recommends me to her love.

Second Point.—Excellence of the devotion considered in its privileges. I. Mary promises to protect me in the midst of perils. If she is for me, who shall be against me? She has promised to save me. Whoever will die wearing this habit shall not suffer the torments of hell. II. This amounts to saying: "Unless you will resist obstinately my tenderness, and force me to reject yot out of my family by stripping you of my livery, I shall conducu

you to eternal happiness." III. She has bound herself to assist me in purgatory and to shorten for me the duration of its pains.

Third Point.—Practice of this devotion. The exterior part of the devotion is easily accomplished; but we should enter into the spirit of it by hearing with docility the silent lessons which the scapular teaches us.

July 19.—St. Vincent de Paul.

MEDITATION CXXII.

"I WAS THE FATHER OF THE POOR." (Job, xxix. 16.)

The saint whose memory is to-day honored by the Church often said: "Ah, what a great thing is a good priest! What can he not do, what does he not do, with the aid of God's grace?" He was himself the proof of that. Born of poor parents in a province of southern France, he was first employed as a herdsman. It was while in that humble position that God chose him to become the instrument of His great designs. After his ordination to the priesthood, a chain of providential events led him to Paris, where, having had charge of two parishes in succession, and with his fame always rising, he found himself almost unawares at the head of the good works of his time. He sought and discovered a remedy, or at least a consolation, for all the ills of humanity. His generous compassion embraced the unfortunate of all classes, the young, the aged, the sick, the convicts, the galley-slaves, the insane. France is covered with monuments of his charity and zeal; and what is still more admirable, in the midst of all his glorious works, he sought but oblivion. He died in Paris in the year 1660, aged eighty-five years. To confine ourselves, in so extensive a subject, within reasonable limits, we shall only consider in this holy priest:

1.—*His Love for the Poor in General.*
2.—*His Zeal for the Salvation of the Poor.*

First Point.—Love of St. Vincent de Paul for the poor. From his childhood he would strip himself in order to clothe the naked, deprive himself of food in order to give it to the hungry. The many associations founded and directed by him, the many hospitals he built, the many aids he procured for whole provinces ravaged by war, famine, and pestilence, the many sums of money he distributed to the slaves of Barbary and to the Christians of

Mount Lebanon, all his enterprises, his whole life, in fact, attest his wonderful love for the poor. It was for the poor he established the Sisters of Charity, who pride themselves on being the servants of the poor; for them he gave the Church a new congregation of sacred ministers.

"We are the priests of the poor," he said to his missionaries, "God has chosen us for them. They are our capital; the rest is but contingent stock."

The sight of the poor, even their names alone, made an impression on him which he could not contain. His voice melted into tenderness every time he pronounced this invocation: *Jesu pater pauperum, miserere nobis.* He suffered by anticipation when he foresaw they would have to suffer. At the beginning of a winter which gave the indications of being exceptionally severe, he said to one of his friends: "What will the poor do? Where shall they go? That, I confess, is the weight and the sorrow that oppress my heart. These poor people say that as long as they have fruits they will live; but that after all the fruits are gone all they can do is to dig their graves and bury themselves alive. O God, what extreme misery, and where is the remedy?"

In his exhortations to the community he spoke often of the poor. He would say: "God loves them, and consequently He loves all those who love them; for, when one has a special affection for any one, one has the same feeling toward his friends and servants. Let us, therefore, my brethren, labor with renewed zeal in behalf of the poor who are the well-beloved friends of God. Let us only hope that for the love of them He will love us also. All who, during life, love the poor, will have nothing to fear at the hour of death. I have seen the proof of it, and, therefore, I am accustomed to instil this maxim into the minds of people whom I know to be fearful of death."

Though he had the tenderness of a father for his children, he seemed to love them only in regard to the poor, as he loved the poor only in relation to God. "Let us never," he said, "have the complaint made of us which the Lord made through the mouth of His prophet: 'I looked for one who would grieve together with Me, but there was none." (Ps. lxxiii. 21.) He wished that all should have such compassion for the unfortunate that their appearance alone would suggest the thought: "These are men of mercy." O Priest, examine your heart and your works. Do you love the poor? Are you sensible to their sufferings? Do you enter into their sorrows with a view to solace and console them as much as you can? Do you love them as a priest should, especially in regard to their eternal salvation?

Second Point.—Zeal of St. Vincent de Paul for the salvation of the poor. To be their consoler and their father in the highest sense, he wished to be their apostle. Three particular motives urged him thereto, namely, the extreme need which the poor have, ordinarily, of spiritual aid, the distinguished rank they hold in the mind of the Church, and the more easy and abundant fruit which the priestly minister gathers among them.

I. St. Vincent had learned in what ignorance of religious truth, and, consequently, in what corruption, the poor both of the city and the country wallowed. He knew that, even in the few asylums then open to the unfortunate, if some little care were given to their bodily ailments, those of the soul were extremely neglected. He had seen the deplorable condition of the galley-slaves. It was more than enough to inflame his zeal. He gathers around him a few good priests, kindles in their hearts the charity of Jesus Christ, and sends them to the rescue of so many perishing souls. He brings together some devoted virgins whom he consecrates to the work of the sanctification of the poor, and who, while attending to the temporal ills of the unfortunate, were to have special care to prepare them for the worthy reception of the sacraments by prayer, pious example, kind exhortations, and wise counsels. He proposes the same object to some pious ladies whom he joins to the work of his apostolate in hospitals and prisons. Everywhere his success was prodigious. In the space of one year there were in the Hotel Dieu of Paris alone upward of seven hundred and sixty abjurations of error and returns to the Catholic Church. From that we may judge of the other conversions.

II. A second motive animated and sustained St. Vincent in his labors for the salvation of the poor, that is, their eminent dignity, viewed from the standpoint of faith. "The Church," says Bossuet, "in its first outlines, was built only for the poor. They are the original citizens of that blessed city which Holy Writ calls the city of God." Does not the Saviour Himself declare that they are the special object of His mission on earth? "To preach the Gospel to the poor He hath sent Me." He begins His sermon on the Mount, and the whole course of His discourses by congratulating the poor, while he has nothing but maledictions for the rich. "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of God!" If heaven, which is God's eternal kingdom, is theirs, the Church, which is God's kingdom upon earth, is theirs too. In effect they shall be the first to enter there. "For see your vocation, brethren, that not many are wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble." (1 Cor. i. 26.)

We know in what consideration the poor were held by the great

Apostle of the Gentiles. He sets the whole Church praying: "I beseech you that you may help me in your prayers." What does he then wish to obtain? "That the oblation of my services may be acceptable in Jerusalem to the saints." (Rom. xv. 30, 31.) He considers them the chief members of the body of Jesus Christ, the favorites of the divine King. Hence also the respect which St. Vincent de Paul had for them. He made them eat at his own table, and had them served first of all. He said to his friends: "Let us look upon them as our lords and masters."

III. Again, that which induced him to take up, in preference to any other, the work of the sanctification of the poor, is that the exercise of the sacred ministry among them is accompanied with less danger and more consoling fruits. Our intercourse with the rich might well inspire us with love for the world; it might flatter our evil inclinations. To how many temptations of vainglory, of human satisfactions does it not expose us? With the poor we have a continual opportunity of practising humility, patience, and mortification. With the poor we have more success, for we know how much it costs the rich to practise Christian morality. The Saviour Himself seems terrified at the difficulty. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." (Luke, xviii. 24.) The poor, on the contrary, are prepared for it by the very life they live. What docility in the latter, what obstinate resistance in the former!

Let us add that just as we scandalize people if we appear to esteem but the souls of the rich, so also we edify them when we imitate Jesus Christ in the loving care which He devoted to the salvation of the poor. An obstinate heretic said one day to St. Vincent that what kept him away from the Catholic Church was to see so many of her ministers leading an indolent life in the cities, while the country people were deprived of even elementary instruction. But the example of St. Vincent and of those who shared his labors happily served to undeceive him. The following year he came to see the saint and said to him: "I now believe that the Holy Ghost directs the Roman Church, since she cares for the salvation of the village poor. I am ready to be received into the Church as soon as you please to receive me."

In our preparation for Mass and in our thanksgiving after, let us beseech the Lord Jesus Christ to communicate to us the spirit of this saint who devoted himself so generously, and labored with so much success, himself and his co-laborers, to the alleviation of the miseries, and to the eternal happiness of the poor.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Love of St. Vincent de Paul for the poor. All his enterprises, his foundations, his works, testified to his ardent and compassionate charity for the poor. The mere mention of their names filled him with emotion. "We are the priests of the poor," he would say to his missionaries, "God chose us for their sake." When addressing his community, he would often speak on this same subject. Is it true that I love the poor, and that I am sensible to their sufferings?

Second Point.—Zeal of St. Vincent de Paul for the salvation of the poor. Three considerations led him to make himself their apostle. I. The great need they have of spiritual assistance. It was particularly in the interest of their souls that he founded so many associations. II. The eminent dignity of the poor considered in the light of faith. Does not the Saviour declare that they are the special object of His mission among men? III. With the poor there is less danger for the priest and greater hope of success. Let us pray God to communicate to us the spirit of a saint who devoted himself so generously, and labored so efficaciously for the temporal relief and the eternal happiness of the poor.

July 25.—St. James the Greater.

MEDITATION CXXIII.

THE SAINT'S FIDELITY.

This apostle holds the third rank among the twelve chosen by Our Lord. He was the son of Zebedee, and the elder brother of St. John the Evangelist. We call him the greater to distinguish him from St. James the Lesser, the son of Alpheus, who was bishop of Jerusalem. It is thought that he was a native of Bethsaida, a town of Galilee, as were St. Peter, and St. Andrew. He was a fisherman as they were. He was, like his brother, the recipient of great privileges from Our Lord. Both induced their mother to ask Jesus Christ that they might occupy the two first places in His kingdom; and Our Lord in return asked if they could share with Him the chalice of His Passion. St. James soon enjoyed this honor, for he was the first martyr among the apostles. He was beheaded at Jerusalem by order of King Herod Agrippa.

1.—*Preparation of St. James for His Apostolic Ministry.*
2.—*His Conduct in the Ministry.*

First Point.—Preparation of St. James for the apostolic ministry. It consisted in an undoubted vocation, prompt and generous fidelity, and a sincere attachment to the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. In the ministry of an apostle, vocation absolutely necessary. Whoever enters the ministry by his own volition seeks but to gratify his own wishes. He may have great talents, all the resources of an able mind, but if he is not called he is destitute of the necessary qualification for an apostle. A man does not acquire his own virtues; how then can other people's virtues be the result of his labors? "Neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth." (1 Cor. iii. 7.) St. James was convinced of this. He had known the Saviour for some time, and was anxious to be considered one of His adherents. He waited only for the invitation of "the Master." What will prophets do in Thy Church, O my God, unless they are chosen by Thee! They may receive the support and admiration of men, but it is quite certain they will not bring about their conversion. They may gain a name for themselves, but they never will be the mediums of grace and salvation. They may captivate minds, but will never win hearts. They will gain glory for themselves, but not for Jesus Christ.

II. Fidelity of St. James to his vocation. Who can describe his joy on hearing the words: "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to be fishers of men." (Matt. iv. 19.) He does not hesitate. He immediately sacrifices everything to purchase the happiness of living and dying with Jesus. This was a truly heroic sacrifice, when we consider its motive, its circumstances, and its extent. The value of a sacrifice does not depend so much on the victim as on the fervor and purity of the heart of him who offers it. The desires of St. James in devoting himself to the cause of Jesus Christ far surpassed the value of his offering. If he had more he would willingly have yielded its possession to Christ. Moreover, according to the reflection of St. John Chrysostom, if he leaves but little, he finds still less. The grace of God induces him to give up not only his means of living; but it offers him in exchange nothing but contradictions, persecutions, and other sufferings. It separates him, perhaps, from a poor, unknown father, but his new Master is less known by the miracles He performs than by the contempt and hatred which the Scribes and Pharisees show for Him. He quits a life of labor, but also one exempt from trouble; he begins a life more penitential, more austere, full of humiliation. As to

extent, the sacrifice of St. James embraces not only all his possessions, but also all his desires and hopes; his views and ambitions may have been empty and deceptive; they, however, filled his mind and pleased his imagination. He gives himself to Christ as willingly and entirely as he gave up his boat and family. Henceforth he shall live in Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ alone; he shall have no interests to promote but those of Jesus Christ. O Priests of God, be you not deceived. Such is the spirit which should fill your minds. The grace which has called you to the evangelical ministry urges upon you the practice of all virtues requisite for properly filling it. You can not accomplish this without renouncing all the inclinations of flesh and blood. Self-abnegation is necessary to the Christian who wishes to follow Jesus Christ. How much more necessary to His minister, who ought to follow Him more closely, and induce others to walk in His steps? "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me." Vocation to the priesthood is vocation to thousands of sacrifices; nothing but an ardent and generous love for Jesus Christ can render them light.

III. Such was the special virtue of the apostle St. James. An ardent love. We have an evidence of this in the promptness wherewith he answers the divine call: "Come after Me." Hardly had he heard these words when there was born in his heart a heavenly fire which consumed all earthly ties. From that moment whatever impairs the glory of his Master is a wound to his heart. When the Samaritans refused entrance of their city to Him who was bringing to them the knowledge of salvation, James became indignant; it seemed to him that God ought to punish on the spot an insult offered to His Son. "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (Luke, ix. 54.) Outbursts of this kind were contrary to the meek charity of the New Law; and the Lord moderated them, though approving of the principle.

A generous love. "Jesus Christ asks him: Can you drink the chalice of reproaches and sufferings which I will drink?" James answers at once, "I can, I will accept it from Thy hands as Thou hast accepted it from the hands of Thy Father." His generosity deserved for him the favors of his Master. Jesus chooses James, with Peter and John, to be the confidant of His secrets, the companion of His watchings and of His prayer, the witness of His most wonderful miracles. He loves him enough to manifest to him His glory on Mount Thabor, He knows that he loves Him firmly—enough to expose him to the sight of His apparent weakness in the Garden of Olives. Let us congratulate this apostle for the ex-

cellent preparation he made for the ministry which the Saviour confided to him, and chide ourselves for imitating him so imperfectly.

Second Point.—How St. James exercised his sublime and divine ministry. Zeal for the sanctification of souls, good examples, courage in accepting all sufferings.

I. It was not in vain that Jesus Christ named him "son of thunder." (Mark, iii. 17.) The word of God in his mouth was full of force and efficacy. What wholesome terrors did not the report of this thunder create in guilty consciences? According to St. Chrysostom the first rage of the Jews would not have been kindled against him if he had not been conspicuous among all the other apostles for his zeal. *Statim ab initio rerum tanto ardore concaluit, ut a persecutoribus occisus sit.* He contributed much to the progress of the Gospel, not in Judea alone, but among distant nations.[1]

II. Let us consider with attention the principal cause of this success. What virtue is there in sermons, even in miracles themselves, when there is question of changing and converting hearts? Of all the wonders wrought by the apostles, certainly the miracle of their own virtues contributed the most to sanctify the world, and it was less by preaching than by doing good that they subjected nations to the law of the Gospel. We learn from St. Epiphanius that St. James kept holy continence and led a most austere and mortified life. Imitating the virginal purity of his brother, he opened with him to chosen souls, the career of great struggles and of great victories, and drew thousands of men, after his example, to lead the life of angels in a frail body. *Jacobus et Joannes in virginitate persistentes, certaminis illius gloriam summa cum admiratione reportarunt; secundum quos infinita hominum millia in mundo, in monasteriis, ejusdem certaminis decus adepta sunt.* (S. Epiph.)

III. To zeal and to sanctity of life, St. James united the determination to encounter and suffer everything to save souls. We can form some idea of the contradictions he had to undergo, if we recollect that the greater part of his ministry was exercised among the Jews, the most blind, indocile, and hardened of all nations. He crowned it by martyrdom, and drank the chalice of his Master, as he had promised. He alone, with St. James the Lesser, had the privilege of shedding his blood in Jerusalem on the same soil which had received the blood of the Son of God. The death of Christ gave birth to the Church; that of St. James gave it a wonderful increase, as it was the occasion of the dispersion of the apostles, who went to preach the Gospel through the whole world. The Master, being about to expire, had prayed for His

[1] According to the Bollandists, St. James carried the Gospel into Spain.

executioners; St. James, when about to die, converted his executioner by embracing him.

Make your resolutions and go to the altar to drink this other chalice which Jesus Christ has prepared for you. It awakens in the good priest the fire of divine love; it takes all bitterness from sufferings, and brings holy delight on the soul! "My chalice, which inebriates, how goodly it is!" (Ps. xxii. 5.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—St. James' preparation for the apostolic ministry. Lawful vocation; prompt and unfaltering fidelity; sincere attachment to the person of Jesus Christ. As soon as he knew the Saviour he felt a most ardent desire to become one of His followers. What a joy was his when he heard the words: Come after Me. He hesitated not an instant. He at once left his bark, his nets, his parents, everything. The extent of his offering was limited only by his capacity. He left but little, true, but what he found was still less. Not only did he give all that he had, but he sacrificed all that he was and also all his hopes. Self-abnegation is indispensable to the disciple of Jesus, and much more so to His minister. An ardent and generous love for Jesus Christ, together with an entire detachment from creatures, are two essential qualities of the apostolic man.

Second Point.—How St. James exercised the holy ministry. He presents for our imitation the zeal which labors for the sanctification of souls, the good example which convinces them, the courage which accepts every suffering to save them. The word of God in the mouth of St. James was full of force. He was the first to incur the fury of the Jews, because his zeal was the more conspicuous. His preaching made the first impression, his example finished the work. Of all the miracles wrought by the apostles, that of their virtues contributed more than any other to the conversion of the world. St. James, also, had courage and patience to suffer everything to obtain the conversion of souls. Jesus Christ being about to expire, prayed for His executioners; St. James a moment before his death, converted his executioner by embracing him.

July 31.—St. Ignatius Loyola.

MEDITATION CXXIV.

HIS SANCTITY AND ABNEGATION.

St. Ignatius was born in Spain, of a noble family. He spent his youth at the court and in the army, and led there an honorable life, but neglected the work of his salvation. His conversion was brought about by the reading of a good book which fell into his hands in place of a novel for which he had asked. He gave himself to God with such perfection that in a short time he rose to great sanctity. He had been a slave to human glory; he made himself a slave to the glory of God. "Thou art My servant, for in thee will I glory." (Is. xlix. 3.) If one had asked him the motive of his penances, of his tears, of his enterprises, from the time of his conversion to that of his death, he might have answered with the prophet Elias: "With zeal I have been zealous for the Lord God of hosts." (3 Kings, xix. 10.)

1.—*He Sought the Glory of God in Everything.*
2.—*He Sought Nothing but the Glory of God.*
3.—*He Sought Nothing but the Greatest Glory of God.*

First Point.—St. Ignatius sought in everything the glory of God. An ancient author divided men into four classes: The men of heaven, the men of earth, the men of men, and the men of God. The first seeks the goods of eternity; the second thirsts after the false goods of earth; the men of men are the slaves of human respect; the men of God adhere to God, and have no ambition save the happiness of pleasing Him. St. Ignatius distinguished himself in the ranks of the first and of the last. His heart always, his eyes frequently turned up to heaven, and he would say, sadly: *Quam sordet tellus dum coelum intueor!* As to his attachment to God, we read in the process of his canonization that he referred to Him all his thoughts, all his words, all his actions, intending in everything to honor Him. We may say that he endeavored to procure the glory of God, the most excellent in its nature, and the most universal in its extent.

I. We glorify God by knowing and loving Him, and we glorify Him in the most excellent manner, when we do as St. Ignatius did —propagate His knowledge and His love. The saint's first care

was to glorify God by sanctifying himself. He went through all the degrees by which the soul rises to perfect sanctity. He began by being penitent. Stripped of his ordinary clothing, covered with a sack, having a cord about his loins, his heart bowed with sorrow, and already inflamed with the love of God, he spends an entire night in prayer before the altar of Mary, in order to give himself to the Son through the Mother. From this moment he considered himself simply as one crucified to the world, and to whom the world was crucified. The grotto of Manreze, the hospitals, the public squares, witnessed the pious mortifications he practised on his body, and the humiliations which he voluntarily endured. Well indeed did he atone for the offences he had offered to God during the time of his worldly life! All his passions were changed into virtues. His self-abnegation, his humility, his patience, charity for God, his love of God and of his brethren, were admirable. Consider his ardent desire of procuring the eternal happiness of souls. His courage, his zeal in the first labors of an apostolic life. His zeal is unbounded. He desires to go to Palestine, there to defend the interests of Jesus Christ among schismatics and infidels. After his return to Europe he understands that he should have an education in order to be more useful for the interests of God. Nothing daunts him in his holy undertakings. Neither great distances, apparently unconquerable difficulties, the annoyance of becoming a student at his age—nothing can arrest the activity of his zeal. Thus he procured the glory of God in the most conspicuous manner. God received glory from Ignatius himself and from others who were influenced by the words and example of the saint; and we may add that this glory was universal.

II. We may apply to St. Ignatius this word of a prophet: "He stood and measured the earth." (Hab. iii. 6.) Ignatius saw the deplorable condition of religion in all parts of the world, and he undertook to remedy the evils which he discovered. He extended his zeal to all ages, all conditions, all peoples, all times. Such is the vast field which he opened to the Society of which he is the founder. God rewarded his wonderful confidence by blessings so abundant, that before his death he saw his disciples entering almost every nation, to spread among them the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and to kindle in all hearts the fire of His love. If St. Gregory is named the apostle of England because he was the means of having the Gospel preached in that country, so does Ignatius deserve the same appellation, relatively to the immense countries of the East, since he sent to them St. Francis Xavier, in whose steps so many other evangelical laborers have walked since his days.

We admire this charity. Let us, however, consider that we also have been created to contribute to the glory of God as well as St. Ignatius. The glory of God is the end of our creation just as it was the end of his. What have we done or suffered up to this day for God? Are we more concerned about things of heaven than of this world? What do we seek? Are we really zealous for the interests of the Lord? Do we glorify Him as much as we can both by ourselves and through others? Should we not shed bitter tears if forced to acknowledge that we have dishonored Him both in ourselves and through others?

Second Point.—St. Ignatius sought nothing but the glory of God. A right intention has God for its end, the pure intention has no other end but God. St. Ignatius can say, after his Master: "But I seek not my glory." With the aid of the light he received in meditation, he had in a short time acquired so perfect a knowledge of himself that the temptation which he least feared was, as he avowed it, the temptation of self-love. This man who had been so anxious and sensitive in matters of human honor was eager for humiliation and contempt. He could not bear any marks of esteem for himself, neither would he allow his company to be praised in his presence. One of his ordinary aspirations was the following: "O Lord, what do I will, or what can I will apart from Thee?" Nothing, however, shows so well his disinterested love as what he said once to one of his disciples: "Were the choice given to me of being immediately put in possession of heaven, or of remaining on earth uncertain of my salvation, but certain of contributing some glory to God, I would, without hesitation, take the last alternative." He added: "The loss which I would incur by this choice would be as much below the gain as the interests of men are below the interests of God." He saw God alone, had no thought except for Him. Hell itself had no terror for him, save that there they hear God's name continually blasphemed. Alas, how few priests there are so entirely detached from creatures, and who could exclaim in all truth: "God alone! God alone!" Where are they who could say: God alone suffices me; I am satisfied in having Him as the witness of my intentions and of my works; I seek, I love Him alone; for Him only do I work, neither do I have any desire save to procure His glory? *Rarus profecto reperitur, qui solo testimonio contentus sit divino. Hoc probatissimorum virorum est proprium, qui in luce veritatis introrsus gradientes, Deo tantum placere concupiscunt.*

Third Point.—St. Ignatius sought nothing but the greatest glory of God. This was his motto. It is found on each page of his constitutions; it was continually on his lips; his whole life

gave it expression. Had he proposed to himself the glory of God or even only His very great glory, he would have set bounds to his zeal, since in this case it would have remained possible to desire or to procure for God something more; but he extended his glory to infinity in seeking His greatest glory wholly and in everything.

Calmness and peace of mind amid many accidents which disturb other men is a sure mark that we live for God alone, and for His greatest glory. St. Ignatius was so united with God, so firmly fixed, so to say, in God's immutability, that the most unforeseen or vexatious events could not alter the serenity of his soul. St. Philip Neri was wont to say on seeing him: "Behold a man who has the face of a denizen of heaven." He tenderly loved the Society which he saw successfully engaged in extending the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and of all trials its destruction would have been the one most trying to his heart, and yet he declared that should the greatest glory of God have demanded this sacrifice, he would, willingly, make it, and that one-quarter of an hour in meditation would suffice to overcome the emotion caused by so painful a blow.

Let us pray to God to give us some idea of His glory—we will then love it. We will devote ourselves to its promotion, according to the degree of our knowledge of its excellence. We will seek in it everything, we will seek nothing else; and as God does everything for our greatest good, so we shall do and suffer everything for His greatest glory.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—St. Ignatius sought the glory of God in everything. His heart was always, and his eyes were often, raised up to heaven. I. He glorified God in the most excellent manner; for he was not satisfied with knowing and loving Him, he devoted himself entirely to make Him known and loved by others. He considered himself, from the time of his conversion, as one crucified to the world, to whom the world was crucified. As soon as he had entered the way of perfection he endeavored to have others follow in it. II. He glorified God in a universal manner. His zeal extended to all ages, all conditions, all people, all times; for he opened his vast field of labor to the Society of which he was the founder. The glory of God is our object as it was his. What have we done and what have we suffered to procure this glory?

Second Point.—St. Ignatius sought the glory of God only. He might well say with his adorable Master: "I seek not my glory." He confessed that self-love was, of all temptations, the one he feared the least. He loved God alone and had no thought save

for Him. And now, what do I do? Would I dare say that Thou art sufficient to me? that I seek nothing apart from Thee?

Third Point.—St. Ignatius sought nothing but the greatest glory of God. This was his motto. He had it always on his lips; it was the expression of his whole life. Hence came that peace and tranquillity of soul which he preserved in the midst of the most unforeseen events. Nothing could alter the serenity of his countenance. Grant that I may know Thee, O my God, and I will always seek Thy glory, Thy greatest glory, and this alone.

August 6.—The Transfiguration.

MEDITATION CXXV.

"THIS IS MY BELOVED SON."

1.—*Contemplate the Persons.*
2.—*Hear their Words.*
3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—Our Lord, six days after that on which He had foretold the glory of His last coming, took with Him Peter, James, and John, and led them apart on to a high mountain, and was transfigured before them. And behold, two men appeared conversing with Him, Moses and Elias. Peter said to Jesus: "Lord, it is good for us to be here, if Thou wilt, let us build here three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." He was still speaking when a miraculous cloud enfolded them, and a voice came out of the cloud saying: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." (Matt. xvii.)

Second Prelude.— Represent to yourself a high mountain, and on its summit Jesus with His three disciples.

Third Prelude.— O Jesus, the most beautiful of the sons of men, gladden my soul with one of the rays of Thy glory, grant me the grace to know Thee. Nothing will then separate me from Thee, and from Mount Thabor I will follow Thee to Mount Calvary!

First Point.—Contemplate the persons mentioned. Jesus Christ, always anxious to strengthen the faith of His apostles, and educating in their persons all the pastors of His Church in the virtues which their vocation requires, showing Himself to them with His face resplendent as the sun and His garment white as snow. Blessed, O Lord, are the eyes which saw Thee and will see Thee in

Thy glory—Peter, James, and John, the only chosen witnesses of the Transfiguration. Extraordinary favors are the lot of a few privileged souls only. Let us congratulate these three apostles, and ask, through their intercession, to be filled with reverence for the supernatural majesty of the Son of God. It was proper that they who were to be eye-witnesses of His humiliations in the Garden of Olives could contemplate Him, at least a moment, in the splendor of His glory. Great graces prepare us for great trials. Moses and Elias conversing with Jesus about the death of the Saviour at Jerusalem. Moses is the type of the meekness and patience necessary to every director of souls. "Moses was a man exceeding meek, above all men that dwelt upon the earth." (Num. xii. 3.) "Carry them in Thy bosom as the nurse is wont to carry the little infant." (Num. xi. 12.) Elias is the type of charity, active and ardent. "Elias the prophet stood up as a fire, and his word burnt like a torch." (Ecclus. xlviii. 1.) Here we have an emblem of zeal; but its principle we shall find in meditation on the Passion and sufferings of Jesus. We learn to love souls and to devote ourselves to their salvation when we go in spirit to Calvary and there meditate on the love which God has for them. He who loves is patient. "Charity is patient . . . it suffers all things."

Second and Third Points.—Hear the words, consider the actions. What is the subject of conversation on that mountain, compassed around with the splendor of the Son of God? They speak of the cruel and ignominious death by which He is to accomplish the will of His Father and the salvation of men, and realize the figures of the law and the oracles of the prophets. Was this, O Lord, a subject pleasing to Thee at a time that Thou wert displaying Thy glory? To speak, however, of Thy death, was to speak of Thy love for man; this is but rarely the matter of my conversation with Thee. Why am I not entirely occupied, penetrated, inflamed with this thought of Thy death, nay, not even at Thy altar, when I offer the sacrifice which places it anew before my eyes? *O memoriale mortis Domini!* O my God, in Thy sufferings, in Thy death, in the excess of Thy love, Thou certainly dost deserve all my love. I should blush to show any ingratitude.

When Our Lord arrived on Mount Thabor He began to pray, and so did the three apostles with Him. Soon, however, they were overcome with fatigue, and fell asleep, so that they saw not the beginning of the Transfiguration, and lost a part of that ravishing spectacle. How many graces and lights do we not lose through tepidity? Aroused from their slumbers, they behold the majesty of their divine Master. Peter, beside himself with admiration, exclaims: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us build here

three tabernacles!" Astonished as he was, he uttered the thought uppermost in his mind. The man of faith considers not the world as a place of joy and repose. When God grants us here some passing consolation, it is to encourage us to labor and to suffer. Are there not, however, many priests who would wish always to live an easy life, forgetful of what they owe religion and their brethren? What loss, what calamity for the world, if the apostles had always remained in the joys of Mount Thabor!

Peter had hardly uttered his request when a new sight presented itself to the three disciples. A bright cloud surrounds the mountain, covering them, and at the same time a heavenly voice issues from the cloud: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. Hear ye Him!" Behold the precept which God gives to mankind: He gave us His own beloved Son to instruct us. The apostles, terrified, fall with their faces upon the ground. The Lord, however, drew near to them, touched them gently, and said: "Arise, fear not!" The apostles, reassured, arise, and look round about them. They see no one but Jesus. To a soul admitted to intimate communings with God, everything is transfigured, everything wears a different aspect. Blessed is the priest who, being taught by the light of eternal truth, sees nothing but Jesus, considers naught but Jesus in his fellow-beings, has no desire but to lead others to Him and to obtain His approbation for himself.

In closing your meditation, you might make different colloquies, with Our Lord and the witnesses of the Transfiguration. Admire His splendor, rejoice with Jesus on account of His glory; promise that you will be more attentive and more respectful to His word. Pray to Elias and Moses to obtain for you their zeal and their meekness; request the holy apostles to impart to you an increase of faith, hope, and charity, which they received on this occasion, so that from Thabor you may follow Jesus to Calvary. Accept, through love for Him, the troubles of this day, and when the time of great sufferings will arrive, strengthen your heart with these words of St. Paul: "We look for the Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of His glory." (Phil. iii. 21.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. Jesus Christ; behold Him on the mountain. Why are Peter, James, and John only present? Why are these three chosen in preference to the others? Contemplate Moses and Elias conversing with Jesus.

Moses is the figure of patience. Elias is the figure of zeal. Both virtues are obtained by meditating on the Passion of Jesus Christ.

Second and Third Points.—Hear the words and consider the actions. Examine the theme of their conversation. O Jesus, no conversation pleases Thee as much as that which relates to Thy Passion and death. It was during prayer that the Saviour was transfigured. Reflect on the ecstasy of St. Peter asking to stay on Thabor. For the man of faith, earth is not the place of joy and rest. Consider the luminous cloud encompassing the mountain; the voice from heaven proclaiming Jesus the well-beloved Son of God, and commanding the listeners to hear Him. Consider the terror of the apostles; their good Master bids them not to fear. Colloquy with Our Lord, and with the witnesses of His Transfiguration.

August 7.—St. Gaetan, Founder of the Regular Clerks—Theatines.

MEDITATION CXXVI.

"I WILL RAISE ME UP A FAITHFUL PRIEST, WHO SHALL DO ACCORDING TO MY HEART AND MY SOUL." (1 Kings, ii. 34.)

St. Gaetan was the faithful priest sent by heaven to raise and sustain the dignity of the priesthood. The Order which he founded had for its object to revive in the clergy the apostolic life of early days, and to silence the tongues of heretics, ever ready to parade the loss of zeal among the clergy in their attacks against the Church. The vow of poverty taken by these Religious was so strict that they could never lay claim to any salary, nor even ask for alms. They lived on the charity of the faithful. By the example of his virtues and the labors of his zeal, Gaetan edified successively Vicence, where he was born, Venice, Naples, and Rome. He was in this latter city when it was captured and pillaged by the Constable de Bourbon of France. In him they saw the perfect priest, the man loyal to the cause of God and the salvation of souls, and entirely free from all worldly attachments. To his society he bequeathed, as an inheritance, three traits of the sacerdotal spirit:

1.—*A Deeply Religious Spirit.*
2.—*Charity for His Fellow-beings.*
3.—*Perfect Confidence in Providence.*

First Point.—St. Gaetan's deeply religious spirit. Grace had deposited early in his soul the germ of that profound respect for the Divinity which continued to develop as time went on. The idea he had in his youth concerning the adorable High Priest of the New Law was so exalted that the mere thought of the priesthood excited in him a thrill of joy mingled with terror. We can imagine his disposition when he was about to receive the imposition of hands, and his sentiments when he offered the Holy Sacrifice. Here are some of his words which we find in one of his letters to a pious person: "Vile dust that I am, I carry the Most High under frail appearances! I have Him before my eyes, and my eyes do not melt into tears! I have Him in my heart and my heart is not on fire!"

During all his life he kept constantly before him this presence of God. It produced in him a well-sustained attention; a modest and serious appearance, and inspired all those who beheld him with the profoundest respect. Hence, also, was noticeable an ardent desire to see the temples of the Lord always kept in suitable condition. He desired to see pomp and magnificence in churches He required that nothing should be amiss in the singing, the ceremonies, and all the exterior ceremonial which enhances the beauty of divine worship, and speaks to the heart while affecting the senses; he would have wished that each of his brethren could say with the prophet King: "The zeal of Thy house has eaten me up." (Ps. lxviii. 10.) "O Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth." (Ps. xxv. 8.)

I, too, for some time, O my God, used to love the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thou dost deign to live in the midst of Thy people. The first time that I celebrated this Sacrifice, justly named the miracle of our mysteries, and distributed to men the Bread of angels, I was deeply impressed with the dignity of a ministry so divine. I felt, as it were, crushed under the weight of Thy holy majesty. I was seized with emotion at the contemplation of the blessings of Thy infinite goodness. Alas, what has become of that vivid faith? Is it not the same Victim which I now immolate, the same living Bread which I eat, the same Chalice of salvation that I drink; are they not the same ineffable perfections which I adore? If, happily, my tepidity and the darkness it spreads around me does not yet extend as far as the Mass, how is it with regard to other duties? Would I be justified in saying that I perform them all in a manner worthy of God, with the recollection, reverence, and interior devotion which I owe Him?

Second Point.—St. Gaetan was a model of charity. This virtue in a good priest should combine the most ardent zeal for the

salvation of men, with the most compassionate kindness for the comfort and relief of the unfortunate.

I. To appreciate the zeal of St. Gaetan for the sanctification of souls, we should remember the deplorable condition of the Church in his days. With as great reality as Jeremias, he saw with his eyes the gold of the temple dimmed, the stones of the sanctuary scattered, scandals without number. He did more than to weep over evils which demanded more effective remedies. His zeal was that of an apostle, active, firm, patient.

His zeal was active. He began at once, without losing a moment. He preaches the Word of God, directs consciences, enters into discussions in which error was confuted. He multiplies himself through the laborers whom he induces to share his toils, and excites in them the zeal which burns in his own heart.

His zeal was firm and intrepid. Neither the power of the great, the boldness of the libertine, nor the hatred of heretics, can trammel his enterprises for the salvation of souls. His zeal, patient and unconquerable, sustained him amid vigils and hardships, against insults, outrages, and acts of violence. Reflect on how much he suffered when the city of Rome was captured and pillaged; he was seen rushing between the living and the dead, rousing the drooping spirits of the faithful, teaching them to die as Christians, and turn their misfortunes to advantage. It was at this time that he was arrested in the very house of God, maltreated, manacled like a criminal, and cast into a dungeon.

What would a lukewarm priest have done? Would he not have found some pretext for escaping from danger, or to spare himself some of those hardships which opened heaven to so many souls? St. Gaetan was the imitator of St. Paul. "Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?" Can I see them suffer and not feel their sufferings? "Who is weak and I am not weak?" (2 Cor. xi.) His charity extends to temporal as well as to spiritual miseries.

II. Italy was at this time full of indigent and sick people, of orphans and of prisoners. Nearly every calamity visited that country at that time. St. Gaetan beheld these misfortunes with sadness, and was anxious to relieve them all. He went from house to house to collect alms, and divided the proceeds among the poor; he spent whole nights with the sick, bestowing on them every assistance. When, to add to other misfortunes, there came a great famine, he gathered together the unfortunate victims of hunger, and distributed food to them. He deprived himself of food in order to give it to the poor. Venice was ravaged by pestilence, its inhabitants fled from the city. Gaetan lived in the city;

his companions followed his example. He did not fear the pestilence. Death would have been a gain. It was indeed a beautiful sight to contemplate that priest thinking only of God and of the welfare of his fellow-beings. This charity, however, always supposes a heart free from all worldly attachments and relying entirely on Providence.

Third Point.—His confidence in God. Gaetan might have applied to himself the words of David: "I am become to many as a wonder, but Thou art a strong helper." (Ps. lxx. 7.) His extreme poverty may have been condemned by many, as being contrary to the rules of prudence, but the Lord was his defender. One knows not which to admire more, the perfection of his hope in God, or the manner in which God justified this confidence.

I. In those days avarice had crept into the sanctuary, and on this account heresy triumphed easily. Gaetan avenged the honor of the priesthood by unheard-of disinterestedness. He gave up, not only all worldly possessions, but also every possible source of revenue save that sent by Providence. The other poor of Jesus Christ have nothing, but they have the ability to ask. Gaetan forbade himself even this means of assistance. He will beg for others but never for himself nor for his disciples. Nay, of that which is offered to him he accepts only what is strictly necessary, putting the rigorous interpretation on the maxim of the Lord, "Be not solicitous." A bishop came to his assistance. Gaetan thought his alms too frequent and too generous; and even threatened to take nothing more from him unless he limited his contributions. What then is the fund on which he is willing to depend? It is Thyself, O my God, Thyself alone. He relies on Thy Providence, of which he knows the wisdom, the tenderness and power. He knows that Thou seest all our wants: "Your Father knows that you have need of all these things." (Matt. vi. 32.) He knows that Thou art willing to assist us because Thou lovest us. "The Father Himself, He loves you." (John, xvi. 27.) That Thou canst do so in any emergency, for Thy wisdom "reaches from end to end mightily." (Wis. viii. 1.) Such is the fund that he must have, but with it he can easily do without anything else.

II. His confidence was always admirably justified. Being once exposed to imminent danger on the Tiber, Providence delivered him in a manner almost miraculous. In the midst of those infected with the plague, he saw death continually under his eyes; but Providence preserved his life. He needed a sum of money in a case of great distress; Providence sent an unknown person who placed it in his hands. He desired to have some companions; and men quite commendable, chosen by Providence, joined him in his

labors. He desired to found an Order; and this Order, notwithstanding difficulties, humanly speaking, insurmountable, was soon founded and flourished throughout all Italy, whence it spread among other nations.

Let us rely upon God for everything. We shall never hope in vain. Let us profit by the example of St. Gaetan and the recommendation of St. Peter. Since God is willing to assume all our solicitudes, let us cast them into His paternal bosom, and let us never entertain any other, save that of expressing our love through our zeal to promote His glory and the welfare of souls. "Casting all your solicitude in Him, for He has care of you." (1 Pet. v. 7.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—St. Gaetan's deep religious feeling. In his youth the mere thought of the priesthood caused him to experience a thrill of joy united with terror. He wrote as follows, after becoming a priest: "I am vile dust, carrying the Almighty under frail appearances; I have Him before my eyes and my eyes do not melt with tears!" He inspired a profound respect in all those who beheld him, for everything belonging to divine worship. He would have wished that every member of the Order which he had founded would be justified in saying to himself: "The zeal of Thy house has eaten me up." "Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house." There was a time, alas, when I, O Lord, loved the beauty of Thy house! What has become of those days of fervor and living faith?

Second Point.—St. Gaetan a model of charity to the people. His zeal was ardent, firm, kind, patient. He preached, guided souls in the ways of God, multiplied himself through the laborers whom he secured. He did more than shed tears over evils which needed radical remedies. His charity extended to temporal miseries. He went about, obtained assistance, and divided the contributions among the poor. He devoted himself to the care of those infected with the plague.

Third Point.—St. Gaetan a model of detachment and of confidence in the hands of Providence. We know not which to admire more, the perfection of his confidence in God, or the care of Providence in justifying the faith of His servant. He gave up, not only all kinds of possessions, but even every human assistance which is not brought about by Providence; to himself he forbade the right to beg, save from the heavenly Father alone. Providence came to his help in every emergency, in every want.

August 15.—Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin.

MEDITATION CXXVII.

VENERATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

THREE joyous and admirable mysteries of Mary, accomplished at about the same time, are the object of this solemnity, the greatest of those which the Church celebrates in her honor; these are her death, her anticipated resurrection, and her triumphant entrance into the eternal kingdom. One can not love the Blessed Virgin without feeling joy at her happiness; and, therefore, all her devoted servants on this day love to contemplate her glory; for on this day she is crowned and proclaimed queen of angels and of men. If, however, we consult the desires of Mary, which are ever conformable to our true interests, we will pay less attention to the glory that she enjoys than to her sanctity, which was its principle and measure. Our duty is to imitate her as far as lies in our power.

1.—*To Her Sanctity alone Mary Owes the Glory of Her Death, of Her Resurrection, and of Her Assumption.*

2.—*Mary is Exalted in Glory above all the Saints, because She Surpasses them All in Holiness.*

First Point.—Mary is glorified in her death, resurrection, and assumption in consequence of her sanctity. In order to be crowned one has to fight manfully. (2 Tim. ii. 5.) She who was the most privileged among all creatures was not dispensed from that law. She triumphs because she has conquered; she receives glory because she has deserved it; her happiness is the result of her sanctity, as her sanctity is the result of her works. Let us apply to Mary, who is pre-eminently the valiant woman, the following words of wisdom: "Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates." (Prov. xxxi. 31.) When will I realize, O my God, that not Thy favors, but my good deeds will entitle me to Thy rewards? Is it the immaculate conception of Thy mother, her divine maternity, or the whole of her privileges which Thou dost crown on this day? No; if such were the case, it might lead me to despair. Thy great favors lay upon us great obligations, and will be terrible accusations if we do not turn them to profit. That which thou rewardest in Mary is her profound humility in her elevation, her unalterable patience amid the most

painful trials, her piety, her charity—in a word, all the virtues which she practised with so great perfection.

The good servant of the Gospel does not simply say to his master: "Thou hast given me five talents." In this there is no merit. He adds that he has multiplied them by his industry: "Behold other five I have gained, over and above." He does not present any other claim to a reward, neither does his master reward anything but his fidelities. "Because . . . thou hast been faithful, enter into the joy of thy master." The same should be said of the incomparable Virgin. Not on account of the prerogatives which she holds from God were her death so sweet and her assumption so glorious, but on account of her sanctity, which, by the aid of grace, she acquired by good works. St. Augustine affirms that if she had not conceived the Son of God in her heart, in a manner more holy than she conceived Him in her womb, the divine maternity would have been for her only a useless though specious title: *Materna enim propinquitas nihil ei profuiset, nisi felicius ipsum fide, quam carne gestasset.*

What should be the inference? "Wherefore, brethren, labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election." (2 Pet. i. 10.) Since this the divine plan, therefore, since the creature most beloved of heaven has had no other way but holiness to reach sovereign happiness, which is promised to us as it was to her, we must labor to sanctify our souls with a zeal even more ardent and generous. "Labor the more." What a subject of comfort to know that it is in our power to "make sure our election;" that the same is not attached to extraordinary favors, but to the virtues of our state, and to the good works which our vocation places at our command at every moment. "By good works." If we do our part, this consideration will be for us at the moment of death an inexhaustible source of hope and consolation.

Second Point.—Mary is exalted in glory above all the saints, because she surpasses them all in holiness. Since Almighty God, according to the rules of His justice, rewards in His Mother only the sanctity of her works, it is just that the reward should correspond with her sanctity. If, therefore, no holiness, apart from God Himself, equals the holiness of Mary, we must believe with St. Bernard and the whole Church, that the glory of Mary is more excellent than that of all created beings: *Super omnem exaltata creaturam.* Never did any pure creature receive so abundant and so excellent graces; neither did she ever receive any that was not increased by her most perfect co-operation. A plenitude of glory was to correspond to a plenitude of holiness: *Quantum enim gratiae in terris adepta est prae caeteris, tantum et in caelis obtinet gloriae*

singularis. (St. Bern.) Therefore, the same saint exclaims in his admiration: *Christi generationem et Mariae assumptionem quis enarrabit?* Mary is borne to the highest place in heaven because she practised the greatest humility on earth. She enjoys in paradise the most ineffable delights of everlasting beatitude because she supremely despises the false pleasures of the world. Her joys in heaven equal and surpass her sorrows in this world. We will receive the same treatment. "He that sows in blessings shall also reap in blessings." (2 Cor. ix. 6.) The victories I will gain over my passions in this world will be fully compensated by my rewards in heaven. The mortifications endured will be offset by as many heavenly prizes. It is certain that God will act most generously with us, and will never allow Himself to be outdone in generosity. He will multiply His graces and shower them upon us, "And He will multiply your seed, and increase the growth of the fruits of your justice." (Ib.)

It can now be understood how Mary could be the Mother of God and at the same time be overwhelmed with a sea of sorrows; how all her trials, even the most poignant and the most heartrending, met with no opposition, even from Christ, who allowed her life to be a continual martyrdom. The consolations which were to follow Mary's death compensated for all the sorrows of her life; and her glorious assumption into heaven set the seal of triumph on all her trials and troubles. Through pure love for His Mother, and with an honorable desire to add to the treasure of her merits, Christ seemed almost indifferent to Mary's request at the wedding of Cana, seemed distant with her in the Temple and at the very foot of the cross. Alas, I complain when He treats me as He treated His Mother! O most faithful Virgin, enable me to follow thee in a path which led to such a happy ending! I will practise humility, I will suffer and sanctify myself by mortification and patience! But help me, my Queen, my Mother. Obtain for me the grace that I may always remember that my annoyance of to-day will be my joy of to-morrow, and that the sorrows of time prepare the delights of eternity.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Mary owes the glory accompanying her death, resurrection, and assumption to her sanctity. There is no crown without a cross. This is the general law. It must not, however, be inferred that any acts of ours deserve the rewards of Almighty God. The good servant mentioned in the Gospel does not simply say to his master that he had received from him five talents, but that he had gained other five talents. Can not the same be applied

to the Virgin Mother of Christ? What should be the inference? Our duty is to make our vocation and our glory secure by good deeds in this life.

Second Point.—Mary is raised in glory above all the other saints because she surpassed them all in sanctity. Eternal glory is bestowed upon merit; and glory and merit always hold a perfect proportion. Her recompense in heaven is equal to her trials in this world. My recompense will also equal my sufferings in this world. O Mother of God, most faithful Virgin, enable me to follow thee on the sorrowful path which leads to Paradise. Obtain for me the grace that I may consider my pains here below a guarantee of happiness at the moment of my death.

August 20.—St. Bernard.

MEDITATION CXXVIII.

THE RESTORER OF THE MONASTIC SPIRIT.

This saint, destined to restore the monastical spirit, and to be the ornament and support of the Church, was born in the year 1091, in the village of Fontaines near Dijon, of a noble and virtuous family. At the age of twenty-two, terrified by the dangers of the world, he withdrew to Citeaux, whither his exhortations and example drew his five brothers, their uncle, and thirty others of his friends and relatives. Later on his father himself followed him, and became the disciple of his son. All of them were received with great joy by the pious abbot Stephen and his Religious. Bernard was soon obliged to leave this holy house to found the monastery of Clairveaux, whence sprang numerous colonies, and he saw even in his day as many as one hundred and sixty monasteries under his guidance. This, however, was only a part of his occupations. After labors almost incredible for the defense of the Church, which he edified by his virtues, enlightened by his doctrine, and instructed by his miracles, he died on August 20, 1153, at the age of sixty-three. His life offers contrasts full of instruction for the pastors of souls. Here are three of them on which we will meditate:

1.—*His Austere Penance United to His Innocence.*

2.—*His Interior Life amid Exterior Occupations.*

3.—*His Self-contempt amid the Applause of the World.*

First Point.—St. Bernard united austere penance to perfect innocence. He had received at his birth that purity of soul and natural candor which always indicate future piety. His parents

took great care to educate him in virtue, and their example was for him a continual lesson. No one, perhaps, was more exposed than he to the allurements of youth, owing to his gifts of body and mind. Young men are strongly tempted to abuse their endowments. Providence guarded the heart of Bernard, and he corresponded nobly to the inspirations of grace. One day he, through inadvertence, allowed his eyes to behold a dangerous object; immediately he threw himself into a frozen pond, in which he stayed a long time, to punish what appeared to him an unpardonable weakness. His conscience could not bear the weight of the slightest fault a moment. Jesus and Mary rewarded this love of purity by favoring him with frequent visits, and granting a special gift of meditation. His communings with God were hardly ever interrupted. Such was the life of St. Bernard in the world.

Of frail body and delicate health St. Bernard found no austerities able to satisfy his love of mortification. Exhausting fasts, vigils, and infirmities could not limit his devotion. That which the flesh lost the spirit gained. He found new motives to endure these austerities, and to impose others greater on himself. A little water, some vegetables, even leaves of trees, a very short sleep, this is all he concedes to nature; he practised this pious cruelty against himself everywhere, as mortified in the palaces of kings as in his own monastery.

The saints are, in the exercise of penance, animated by motives which we seldom consider. The less guilty they are, the greater sinners they believe themselves to be; the more pure their soul, the more defects do they discover even in their most perfect actions. Their zeal for the glory of God convinces them that the least offenses against His majesty are deserving of the most severe expiations. When the past troubles them not, they tremble for the future. To them it seems wiser rather to prevent the commission of sin than to weep over sin already committed. They, moreover, have too great a love for Jesus Christ to consent to remain without sufferings when they think of the God-man who suffered so much for their sake. They wish it were in their power to say: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross." (Gal. ii. 19.) For this reason the Church honors as penitents all those whom it honors as saints. In apostolic men, zeal for the salvation of their neighbor is the motive which induces them to love sufferings and mortification, since Jesus Christ redeemed mankind by the sacrifice of the cross. We can not better apply to them the merits of salvation, than by imitating, as far as possible, the penance of Jesus on the cross. The better way to convert souls is to appease the anger of God in their behalf.

Second Point.—Interior life of St. Bernard joined to a life of exterior labors. "I am," he exclaimed, "the chimera of my age, a solitary without solitude, taken up with all the affairs of the world, though I left the world in order to think of God alone." Certain it is that he had a part in all the events of his age, or rather that he was the soul of them. If we follow him in cities, in courts, or in councils, three times crossing and re-crossing the Alps, going over the whole of France, penetrating the most distant parts of Germany, we find him intrusted with intricate negotiations, and matters of the most delicate nature, striving now against schism, now against heresy and always against intractable passions. But in the midst of this exterior agitation he is ever calm, ever united to God through the accomplishment of His will. "The things that are pleasing to Him I do always." He complains, he laments whenever he has to leave his monastery. *Itane, bone Jesu, tota deficit in dolore vita mea? Tristis est anima mea usquedum redeam.* He leaves it, but does not interrupt the intimacy of his communications with God. A historian of his life said that Bernard, though not able to carry his cell with him, always carried his recollection and interior solitude: *Ubique solus erat.* Like unto the angels, who ever contemplate the face of God, St. Bernard, taken up with the affairs of the world, remains always separated from the world, and opens his heart to God alone.

Such is the true spirit of the apostle of Jesus Christ. It is not the activity of Martha, nor the contemplation of Mary, it is the union of both. St. Bernard knew how to treat with his neighbor in the interests of God, so as to make Him reign over the hearts of men. He knew also how to remain interiorly united to God, in the interest of his fellow-creatures, in order to labor successfully for their sanctification and salvation. In all this, pastors of souls should strive to imitate him. They should also imitate his profound humility.

Third Point.—St. Bernard's self-contempt in the midst of the universal admiration of others. Who was ever more honored than he? Kings go to him in his solitude; three Popes are guided by his counsels, and in a manner rely on him for help in the most trying circumstances. He is everywhere looked upon as an angel from heaven, and hearkened to as if he were an oracle. The authority of his word and the respect which he inspires decide all questions. He it was who wrote the canons of the councils of Pisa, of Troyes, of Etampes and Rheims. In Languedoc he triumphs over Henry the heresiarch, and in Guienne over William, whom he changes from a wolf into a lamb. He brings about the condemnation of Gilbert de la Porree and of Peter Abailard. His

burning eloquence and the miracles he wrought induce immense multitudes to follow him; in order to see him, all work is suspended. At Spire and Constance, the bishops and the clergy are obliged to make a barrier of their bodies for him; at Frankfort an emperor bears him off on his shoulders in order to save him from the multitudes that press upon him.

Yet with successes so admirable, his humility but becomes more profound. He tries to obscure the halo of glory which surrounds him. When many large cities request that he be appointed their bishop, he earnestly entreats the Holy Father to forward him a brief, excluding him from any ecclesiastical dignity. When all voices proclaim him a saint worthy of canonization, he, in a manner, declares himself a reprobate because of his sins. While men lavish praises upon him, he begs that they pray for God's mercy on his soul. Let us hear him speak of himself: *Volo vos mihi credere de me magis quam alteri, qui tantum videt in facie. . . . Dico vobis, ego qui de me loquor non ex conjectura, sed ex sententia: non sum talis qualis putor, vel dicor; quod quidem tam securus fateor, quam certus experior.* (Ep. 11.) *Tam vilis et abjectus vir appearem, quatenus pudeat eos talem ita laudasse. Quis dabit mihi apud homines de vitiis digne humiliari, quantum de falsis dotibus me video indigne exaltari?* (Ib.) What a lesson for those who, instead of humbling themselves, seek only to be exalted!

In preparing for the Holy Sacrifice, and while going up to the altar, offer to God the dispositions of St. Bernard, and bear in mind what he says of the heavenly bread as a remedy for the infirmities of the soul: *Si quis vestrum non tam saepe modo, non tam acerbos sentit iracundiae motus invidiae luxuriae aut caeterorum hujusmodi, gratias agat corpori et sanguini Domini, quoniam virtus sacramenti operatur in eo; et gaudeat quod pessimum ulcus accedat ad sanitatem.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—St. Bernard's austere penance united to innocence. His youth was spent in innocence and purity, and yet he left the world, entered the religious state and there practised untold mortifications. The less guilty the saints, the greater sinners they think themselves. If the past does not alarm them the thought of the future causes them to tremble. The knowledge they have of their weakness, and their zeal for the glory of God, are the motives of their ardent love of penance. They remember the God-man who suffered so much for them, and they can not consent to a life without suffering.

Second Point.—Interior life of St. Bernard in the midst of incessant exterior occupations. He took part in all the events of his age. He was intrusted with the most intricate negotiations, had to contend with error and all kinds of passions. Yet he was always calm, always united to God. How blessed, O Lord, is that soul which knows how to unite the activity of Martha with the contemplation of Mary!

Third Point.—Humble life of St. Bernard amid marks of universal esteem. Kings court his friendship, Popes are guided by his counsels, the people heap upon him extraordinary honors; he performs great miracles. With successes so wonderful he becomes more humble. He despises himself, conceals himself, tries to live unknown and forgotten. What a lesson for those who having so many reasons to humble themselves, are puffed up, and seek to be noticed and admired by their fellow-creatures.

August 28.—St. Augustine.

MEDITATION CXXIX.

HIS CONVERSION.

AUGUSTINE was born at Sagaste in Africa, on November 13, 354, and gave, even in early childhood, indications of the power of his mind; but led astray by passions, he gave himself up to a wicked life, and even became infected with the heresy of the Manicheans. His mother, Monica, shed so many tears for his conversion that God at last heard her prayers. The discourses of St. Ambrose made a great impression on his mind. The reading of a passage of the Gospel, together with extraordinary graces, at last conquered his rebellious will. He at length gave himself up entirely to God, to the Church, and the welfare of souls. Valerius, bishop of Hippo, ordained him priest, and having taken him for his coadjutor, made him participate in his pastoral charge. St. Augustine had received from God the gift of a most powerful intellect; his learning was only surpassed by his charity and it has been said of him that he was: *Pater Patrum, Doctor Doctorum, par angelis in fervore, par prophetis in absconditorum musteriorum revelatione, par apostolis in praedicatione.* (Possid.) He died during the siege of Hippo by the Vandals. The great event of his life was his conversion, which was a triumph of God's grace. Hence we will consider:

1.—*The Triumph of God's Grace in the Conversion of St. Augustine.*
2.—*The Triumph of the Church through His Conversion.*

First Point.—The triumph of grace in the conversion of St. Augustine. The victory which grace won over this sinner, destined to become the father of so many saints, was so much the more glorious, as it was difficult on the one hand, and on the other complete.

I. Everything in Augustine opposed the triumph of grace; his mind and heart, the obstinacy of heresy, and the tyranny of passions. When error has once enslaved a man of superior mind, one who has the consciousness of his superiority, many are the difficulties which stand in the way of divine grace. Manicheism flattered the pride of Augustine, and he immediately posed as its zealous partisan. He soon renounced that heresy, it is true, but it was in order that he might capriciously go from one sect and embrace another. Up to the time of his conversion he had all the pride of a philosopher, all the obstinacy of a heretic. Such were the obstacles of his mind which stood in the way of faith.

What now of the opposition of his heart to Christian morality? A slave to ambition, avarice, voluptuousness, evil passions held him in their grasp, vied mutually, as it were, as he said himself, to gain mastery over him: *Inhiabam honoribus, lucris, conjugio, et patiebar in eis cupiditatibus amarissimas difficultates . . Certabant in meipso et de meipso, cujus potissimum esse viderer.* (Conf., l. vi. ch. 6.)

How patiently grace waited upon his long neglect! What power it displayed to overcome his prolonged obduracy! Licentiousness had grown within him so as to have become an imperious habit, and habit itself a sort of necessity: *Suspirabam ligatus, non ferro alieno, sed ferrea mea voluntate.* At times the beauty of virtue delighted him; at others, he felt oppressed by the weight of his chains. He willed and willed not; he prayed, and was afraid to be heard. "Soon, O Lord," he would sometimes exclaim, "a little while and I will be Thine;" but that *soon* never came, and that short *while* was everlasting: *Modo, ecce modo, sine paululum; sed modo et modo non habebat modum, et sine paululum ibat in longum.* The blessed moment comes at last; grace overcomes him as it did Saul on the way to Damascus, and, according to the expression of St. Zeno of Verona, *with one blow* the old man is destroyed and the new man created: *Uno ictu interficit veterem hominem, creat novum.*

II. The victory was complete. In the midst of his mental agitation he hears a voice which says to him: *Tolle et lege.* He obeys and suddenly receives inspirations which engender the first fruits of grace; firm faith, unshaken confidence, thoughts of eternity, love of the Scriptures. His affections are changed as well as his thoughts. This man, hitherto addicted to shameful pleasures,

is now chaste, heavenly, filled with holy and sublime aspirations. "There rose up in my heart," he writes, "a great storm, which was followed by an abundant shower of tears. Solitude struck me as the fittest abode for the wailings of grief; I went and threw myself beneath the boughs of a fig-tree, that there I might weep undisturbed. I then turned to Thee, O my God, and I said: How long, O Lord, how long? Ah, remember then no longer my iniquities!" What sorrow for the past! He will never forgive himself for having, during so long a time, offended a God whose goodness impresses him more deeply than does the fear of His justice.

He now embraces that adorable justice, and thinks of nothing but self-chastisement. An austere life will repair his sensual life, voluntary humiliations atone for his pride. He had coveted the applause of men; he now asks but for their contempt. Not only does he censure his own works, but composes a book upon which, as upon an altar, as he says himself, he offers to God his reputation. Was there ever seen such an example of humility? Augustine wears the robe of baptismal innocence and makes a public confession which was not required of public sinners; he makes it before the whole world, not by a momentary action, but in a book which shall last as long as the world itself. Throughout all ages and in all places, his vagaries and licentious youth will be known.

How well he atones for his criminal habits and longings! The sacred fire of God's grace and love has changed the heart of flesh, and transformed it into a heavenly heart. When we read his soliloquies, his confessions, and his commentaries on the psalms, we find nothing but sentiments of admiration, expressions of gratitude, outpourings of the most ardent love. Writing about himself he says: *Incredible est, quantum in me Deus excitaverit amoris incendium!* In another passage he exclaims: *Vae tempori quo te non amavi! Deus, vita mea, qui oblitum tui non es oblitus! Mens mea devota tibi, tui amore succensa, tibi spirans, tibi inhians, te solum videre desiderat.*

Grant us to-day, O Lord, through the intercession of this great penitent, the grace which the most holy priest asks of Thee every day: *Converte nos, Deus, salutaris noster.*

Second Point.—Triumph of the Church through the conversion of St. Augustine. This holy Doctor tells us, in the tenth book of his confessions, that as soon as he yielded to the voice of grace, and his eyes had been opened by it, he desired to retire into solitude, there to weep over his errors till the end of his life, but that God had prevented him from so doing by revealing to him that He had other designs upon him: *Meditatus fueram fugam in solitudinem, sed prohibuisti me, et confirmasti me.* He had been an admirable con-

quest of grace; he was to be one of its most admirable instruments. The charity of Jesus Christ urges him; he feels the want of spreading the love of that God whom he has so much offended. Not satisfied with preaching with indefatigable constancy to his people, his zeal, like that of St. Paul, extends to all the churches of the world. Grace does through him what it had done for him; it subdues and takes possession of the minds and hearts of men.

Through his words as well as through his writings Catholic truth triumphs over the blindness of pagans, the subtlety of philosophers, the obstinacy of heretics. He wages war against the Arians, the Manicheans, the Donatists, the Priscillianists, the Pelagians, the Semipelagians and others, and so successfully that St. Jerome thus writes to him: *Macte virtute, in orbe celebraris: Catholici te conditorem antiquae rursum fidei venerantur atque suspiciunt; et, quod signum majoris gloriae est, omnes haeretici detestantur.* (Ind. Ep. Aug. 195.) He is the soul of councils, the voice and organ of the whole Church, the master of the learned. SS. Fulgentius, Prosper, Leo, Gregory the Great, Bernard and Thomas thought it an honor to adopt him as their master. It seems that God had raised him up to confound not only the errors of his day, but likewise those of coming ages.

While subjecting men's minds to the doctrine of truth, he also subjected their hearts to the law of God. Never shall we be able to know the number of conversions brought about by the mere reading of his confessions. How many souls has this precious book preserved or saved from despair by means of the confidence which it inspires! How many sinners have been encouraged to confess their sins to the priest, seeing with what simplicity the great Augustine made a public avowal of his. How many have been sanctified in the Religious Orders which have adopted his spirit and his rule, and acknowledge him as their founder. But of all triumphs, the one most dear to the Church is the triumph which grace works in the persons of her ministers, by raising them up to the perfect virtues of their sublime vocation, since the sanctification of pastors exercises such an influence upon that of their flocks. In this St. Augustine concurred most efficaciously by becoming the model of all pastors.

Let us return thanks to God for what He did for this great saint, and, through him, for the whole Church. Let us, after his example, repay our debt to God's grace, causing it to reign over us and over our brethren. Let us often say to God with Augustine: *Agnosce quod tuum est: ignosce quod meum est.* That which I have from Thee, O my God, is a countless number of invaluable blessings, and that which I see in myself is nothing but base ingratitude

which makes me blush with shame, and for which I will never cease to beg Thy pardon and mercy. By my crimes I deserve hell, and I fear it; through Thy blessings heaven is mine, and I hope one day to possess it. Oh, why did I not begin earlier to love Thee? *Sero te amavi, pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova, sero te amavi!*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Triumph of grace in the conversion of St. Augustine. I. It was difficult to obtain. Everything in him was opposed to the action of grace; the mind, the heart, the obstinacy of heresy, the tyranny of passions. Up to the time of his conversion, he had the pride of a philosopher, the stubbornness of a heretic. All the passions, he says, were in a wild conflict to see which of them would be his chief tyrant. II. In him the triumph of grace was complete. When under the influence of the severest mental afflictions, he heard a voice which said: *Tolle et lege.* He obeyed, and immediately his mind was enlightened in an extraordinary manner; the object of his affections changed, together with his thoughts. He prayed, he wept, he had no other desire save that of doing acts of penance and mortification. An austere life repairs his former sensual life; voluntary humiliations atone for his pride.

Second Point.—Triumphs of the Church through the conversion of St. Augustine. He had been a glorious conquest of grace—he was destined to be one of its most admirable instruments. He feels the necessity of spreading the love of God, whom he loves, after having offended Him so grievously. Grace achieves through him what it had done for him; it subjugates the minds and hearts of men, and wins them to God. He strives against all errors, and his success is marvelous. He ceases not to preach the word of God until incapacitated by sickness. How many conversions brought about by the mere reading of the book of his confessions! How many religious institutes have adopted his rule, and have given a multitude of saints to heaven!

September 8.—The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin.

MEDITATION CXXX.

"WHO IS SHE THAT COMETH FORTH AS THE MORNING RISING, FAIR AS THE MOON, BRIGHT AS THE SUN, TERRIBLE AS AN ARMY IN ARRAY?" (Cant. vi. 9.)

1.—*This Feast Reminds us of the Sublimity of Our Vocation.*
2.—*It Encourages us to Fulfil it Worthily.*

First Point.—This feast reminds us of the sublimity of our vocation. What was Mary's vocation? I represent to myself a relative or friend of St. Joachim, entering his house soon after this blessed nativity. I suppose that while considering in her cradle the lovely infant, in whom are united all the charms of nature and grace, a sudden light from heaven enables him to perceive all the wonders that God has already wrought for her, all that she has already done for God. We suppose him to be taught her immaculate conception and its prerogatives, also her correspondence with heavenly gifts, which has already raised her far above all the saints. How great would be his admiration! What would he think of the destiny of that infant? Would he not be justified in believing that if the Most High will have a spouse, if the Son of God will have a mother, if poor sinners will have a mediator with God, the infant who has just entered the world must be that spouse, that mother, that mediator?

Mary was born in order to be the Mother of Jesus. "Of whom was born Jesus." This is the principle of all her privileges, the summing up of all her praises: *Quidquid de Virgine scire, aut intelligere cupis, totum in hoc clauditur breviloquio; De qua natus est Jesus.* (St. Th. a Villa. serm. de Nat. B. M. V.) It is as the Mother of the Redeemer of mankind that she will be the refuge and advocate of sinners. She is the aurora which precedes and ushers in the morning sun: *O beata Virgo, tu est aurora de sole precedens et ortum solis praeveniens.* (St. Bonav. Spec. B. V.) Hence we may explain and account for the universal feeling of joy which characterizes this holy festival: *Gaudeamus et exultemus in Nativitate beatissimae Dei Genitricis Mariae, quae novum mundo nuntiavit guadium, et totius extitit humanae salutis exordium.* (St. Pet. Dam. hom. 47 de Nat. B. M. V.) *Cum summa exultatione gaudeat terra nostra, tantae virginis illustrata natali.* (St. Aug.

serm. de Nativ. B. V. M.) Certain it is that if men had known the blessings which Mary's nativity drew down upon them, there would have been throughout the whole world a repetition of that which occurred among the Jews at their having been preserved from death through the meditation of Esther. "A new light seemed to rise, joy, honor and dancing in all peoples . . . wonderful rejoicing." (Esth. viii. 16, 17.)

You also, O Priests, were born for a sublime destiny! Accomplish it faithfully, and you shall be the cause of an unspeakable joy for heaven and earth. To give Jesus to the world, and with Jesus to give it all blessings, such is our vocation, and such was the vocation of Mary. This is the reason why the holy Virgin has such a warm affection for good priests and lavishes upon them such truly maternal cares.

Resemblance engenders kindness. See how great and admirable is the analogy between the priest and the Mother of God! The priesthood makes us participate in her dignity, her office, her power and happiness. In her dignity, for the Word of God made flesh puts Himself under our control as He had put himself under hers, and obeys us as He deigned to obey her. If she had so large a share in the Redemption of mankind by giving to the world Him who redeemed it by His blood, we also share therein by applying to men the fruits of that abundant Redemption. In her power. The doctors admire the virtue of the "word." "Be it done unto me according to Thy word," by which the Son of God was attracted from the bosom of His Father into that of a virgin. They equally admire the efficacy of the sacramental form, which, spoken by us, causes the Son of God to descend every day and be immolated on our altars. Finally, are we not in some respects almost as happy as Mary? Hear St. Augustine: *Si beatus venter qui novem mensibus Christum portavit, etiam beata esse debent corda in quibus sibi hospitium quotidie eligit filius Dei. . . . Si beata sunt ubera quae parvulus, suxit, ita debet esse os beatum, quod carnem ejus summit, et sanguinem sugit.* Let us appreciate the favor which God granted us by calling us to the priesthood.

Second Point.—This feast reminds us that we should follow the duties of our vocation, after Mary's example, and invoke her powerful and salutary intercession.

I. Mary has scarcely come into the world when she offers to God, with fervor greater than that of a seraph, the homage of the adoration and love she ceased not to offer to Him from the first moment of her immaculate conception. On this very day her perfect submission to God's will, her gratitude for all His blessings bring forth those excellent acts of virtue which justified her in

saying: When I was little, I pleased the Lord. In Mary, God the Father sees His image resplendent with the purest beauty, while in the rest of mankind He sees it disfigured by sin. The Holy Ghost, banished from almost every heart, dwells in the heart of Mary as in a sanctuary worthy of Himself. The Son of God sees in her so many virtues that He longs to call her His Mother. Mary already exercises her priesthood: *Virgo sacerdos*, offering, in order to glorify the Holy Trinity and promote the salvation of men, all the sacrifices of her life. Next to Jesus, Mary affords us the most perfect model of sanctity. Since we can not equal her merit, let us try at least to correspond as faithfully as we can to the graces that are lavished upon us as they were lavished upon her.

II. We should be particularly stimulated and comforted in the exercise of our duties, notwithstanding our personal weakness and the difficulties of our ministry, by knowing that we have in the protection of our august Virgin Mother a resource we might call infinite. If Mary be with us, who shall be against us? Whom will she protect, if not those who propagate her own glory and especially the glory of her Son? Her love for Jesus, her tender compassion for souls whose mother she became by sacrificing her Son, tell us loudly enough how earnest is her interest in our labors. Let us invoke her with unlimited confidence. This day is particularly favorable for prayer. Kings and queens of earth love to celebrate the anniversary of their birth by benefactions; and could the Queen of the universe refuse us any grace on this day, when she was born to be the dispenser of all graces, to give life to the world, to draw down upon it all heavenly blessings? *Maria hodie prodiisti . . . . guadium mundo universo annuntians, vitae largitrix, benedictionis conciliatrix.* (St. Germ.) Let us pray to her for ourselves and for the souls confided to our care. Oh, how efficaciously will we labor for their salvation, if on the occasion of this feast we exhort them to honor Mary! Let us teach them how deserving she is of our veneration, gratitude, and love. *Praedica reverendam angelis, desideratam gentibus, patriarchis prophetisque progenitam, electam ex omnibus . . . . magnificae gratiae inventricem, mediatricem salutis, et restauratricem saeculorum.* (St. Bern., ep. 174.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—This feast reminds us of the sublimity of our vocation. If any one, contemplating Mary immediately after her nativity, had had a revelation of her supreme dignity, what would he have thought of her future? He would undoubtedly have said:

If God is ever to have a mother here below, she lies there in that cradle. It was for this purpose that Mary was born. Hence our great joy in the celebration of this feast: *Cum summa exultatione gaudeat terra nostra tantae virginis illustrata natali.* You also, O Priest, were born for a sublime destiny,—to give Jesus to the world! Many are the points of resemblance between you and the Mother of God! You participate in her dignity, her office, her power and her happiness.

Second Point.—This feast animates us to fulfil the duties of our vocation, in view of the example which Mary gives and the assistance she offers. How fervently she offers to God the homage of her whole self, as she had already done at the moment of her immaculate conception! Already she exercises her priesthood, offering to the Holy Trinity all the sacrifices of her life! We should be particularly encouraged in the faithful discharge of all our duties, knowing that we have in the protection of the Blessed Virgin an almost infinite source of assistance. Let us implore her intercession for ourselves as well as for all the souls confided to our care. Let us endeavor to make them devout servants of Mary.

September 14.—Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

MEDITATION CXXXI.

THE SORROWS OF CALVARY.

1.—*Nothing is More Indispensable to the Priest than Meditation on the Mystery of the Cross.*

2.—*Few Christians, Nay, Few Priests are Able to Sound the Depths of this Mystery.*

First Point.—Nothing is more indispensable to a priest than meditation on the mystery of the cross. The Saviour going up to Jerusalem predicted for the third time that He would soon be put to death there. "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all those things shall be accomplished which were spoken by the prophets concerning the Son of man." Prodigies of charity and of patience in the Son of God; prodigies of ingratitude and perversity on the part of men; all will soon be consummated. To the apostles alone it was that Jesus Christ confided this secret. "He took unto Him the twelve and spoke to them." Every one does not understand the mystery of the cross, nor is it necessary that all should understand it in the same degree of perfection; but it is necessary that

apostolic men should possess this sacred science in a high degree, that they should be deeply impressed with this mystery. Hence it is that the Saviour so often speaks of it to them.

Amid the heavenly joys of Thabor, He wishes that they think of the sorrows of Calvary. "They spoke of His sacrifice on Calvary which He was soon about to undergo." (Luke, ix. 31.) If He sees their minds led astray by dreams of ambition, hoping to occupy a high rank in His kingdom, He reminds them of the ignominies of His death. "Can you drink the chalice which I shall drink?" When He gives them His flesh for food and His blood for drink, He is careful to tell them that this is the same body which shall be given up, and the same blood which shall be shed for them. "Which shall be given up for you . . . which shall be shed for you." Holy communion will always be a memorial of the Passion of Our Lord—*recolitur memoria passionis ejus.—O memoriale mortis Domini.* If He confers on them the power to offer His immolated body, the blood that was shed for us on the altar, it is because they may be mindful of Him and of His death. "As often as ye do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me." His mystical immolation will be the memorial of His real immolation on Calvary. O Priests, can we repeat the touching words which end the consecration without admiring the love of God? He dies for us and recommends us to think of Him! Let us blush for shame because of the hardness of our hearts, which made this recommendation so necessary, and which, alas, too often renders it of no use.

This remembrance is strongly recommended to us and is also strongly connected with all our obligations. Our zeal will grow cold if we do not frequently meditate on the sufferings of Jesus Christ. We shall not know the infinite perfections of God, His greatness, His sanctity, His mercy, His justice, and if so, how shall we be zealous for His glory? Neither shall we know the value of souls deemed worthy of such Redemption, nor of the immensity of the happiness or of the misfortune which awaits them. Where, then, shall we find that generous devotedness of which we stand in need in order to save them? If we do not meditate assiduously on the cross, something essential will be lacking in the exercise of our functions. The first of our obligations is to instruct. This is our mission. "Going to teach." What shall we preach, if not "Jesus Christ and Him crucified?" (1 Cor. i. 23.) This mystery is the summary of the apostolic preaching; the foundation of our faith. It rises up, as sweet perfume, says St. Peter Damian, from every page of Scripture: *Quae est sacri eloquii pagina, quae crucis mysteria non redoleat!* (Ser. de In. crucis.) The crucifix is a book which we should place in the hands of the ignorant and of the

learned, of the sinners and of the just. *Legit simplex, et laetificatur, atque cumpungitur; exercitatus vero et intelligens irradiatur atque accenditur.* (S. Laur. just de triumph Christi agone.)

In this book we ourselves shall learn the patience, the meekness, and the tender compassion which are indispensable in the pulpit and in the confessional and while we attend the sick. This book will enlighten us regarding the august ministry we fulfil at the altar. Let us read it with attention, let us endeavor to understand it, and we shall cease to grieve the angels by our cold representation of the man-God, agonizing in the Garden of Olives, dragged before the tribunals, raised on the cross, laid away in the tomb. The priest, therefore, should possess in a high degree the science of Jesus crucified, if he has no other. "I judged not myself to know anything amongst you, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (1 Cor. ii. 2.) But in order to acquire it, he should often meditate on this mystery.

Second Point.—Few Christians, nay, few priests understand well the doctrine of the cross. There was nothing obscure in the language used by Our Saviour in predicting His approaching death; everything in it was clear and precise, yet His words were an enigma to those who heard them. The dullness of their intellect seems surprising to the Evangelist, who relates the fact: "And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said." (Luke, xviii. 34.) "The apostles" says St. Bonaventure, "were in this circumstance the image of those pastors who do not penetrate the mystery of the cross, and do not see it in its true light." (Ep. in. h. l.)

There are three obstacles which shut out this wholesome truth from the minds and hearts of man. *Pride,* by which faith is darkened. We understand but faintly this excessive charity. We would that God had no more goodness than that which we can understand. Must it be, O Jesus, that the greatness of Thy love should be for men a motive for wounding Thy heart by our incredulousness! *Dissipation of mind.* Rarely and superficially do they reflect on a mystery which was the continual subject of the saints' meditations.

Alas, is it not true that there are priests who explain the Passion of Jesus Christ, celebrate every day the Holy Sacrifice which is its continuation and application, and yet whose souls remain unmoved even at the altar? The case is different with men of the interior spirit. One word on the sufferings and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ, one look at the cross, suffices to move them to compassion, to love and gratitude. Alas, why am I not one of the number? *Want of mortification.* Men do not like to understand

that which is incompatible with the easy, sensual life which they will not give up. Before the death of Christ the apostles did not understand a doctrine which they did not relish. *Non intelligebant, quia hanc veritatem non diligebant.* (St. Bon. Ib.) When the virtue of the cross and the grace of the Holy Ghost shall have changed them into new men, they will love and comprehend it all and exclaim: *O bona crux, quae decorem ex membris Domini suscepisti, diu desiderata, sollicite amata . . . . accipe me ab hominibus, et redde me magistro meo, ut per te me recipiat qui per te me redemit.*

O Lord, the resolution which I now make by Thy inspiration is often to meditate and preach on Thy sufferings. It will, if I be faithful to it, suffice to sanctify my life and make my ministry fruitful. I shall find therein the motive and model of all sacerdotal virtues. Therein I shall find the most salutary consolations, and while loving Thee I shall thereby enjoy the pleasure of leading souls to Thee. *Haec meditare, fili; in his esto; et fiet tibi in cruce mea salus, vita, protectio ab hostibus, infusio supernae suavitatis.* (Mem. vit. sac. ch. 19.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—There is nothing more indispensable than the remembrance of the mystery of the cross. The Saviour loved to remind His disciples of this subject. A few days before His Passion He minutely foretold its circumstances; nay, he spoke of it on Mount Thabor. The institution of the priesthood, of the holy Eucharist, everything in fact, tends to remind us of the mystery of the cross.

The crucifix is the book of the elect. This is the book which was the making of the saints, and which pointed out the way of salvation. It is, above all, the book of priests; at this fountain-head of spiritual treasures they find zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Second Point.—Few Christians, nay, few priests really understand this mystery. There was no obscurity in the Saviour's language, and yet the apostles understood none of those things. Three obstacles stand in our way when we try to comprehend this wholesome truth. *Pride*—which obscures our faith. We would that God had no more goodness than we can understand. *Dissipation of mind*—which prevents us from reflecting seriously. *Lack of mortification*—one is not ready to admit that which is incompatible with the easy life he is unwilling to renounce.

September 29.—St. Michael

MEDITATION CXXXII.

"AND THERE WAS A GREAT BATTLE IN HEAVEN. MICHAEL AND HIS ANGELS FOUGHT WITH THE DRAGONS." (Apoc. xii. 7.)

1.—*Lucifer's Pride Punished; St. Michael's Humility Rewarded.*
2.—*Pride Prepares for the Fall, Humility for the Exaltation.*
3.—*How may We Avoid the Punishment of the Proud, and Deserve the Reward of the Humble?*

First Point.—The pride of Lucifer punished, the humility of St. Michael rewarded.

I. According to SS. Jerome and Gregory, Lucifer was, in the order of nature and of grace, the most perfect work which had come from the hand of God. It is certain, according to scriptural inference, that pride was the cause of his fall; but in what that pride consisted can not be so well ascertained. The common opinion is, that the good angels having been created in the state of grace and justice, God willed that they should enjoy supreme and everlasting beatitude if they made a right use of their liberty. During this time of trial He revealed to them some of the designs of His Providence and particularly the Incarnation of the Word, whom He commanded them to adore, hypostatically united to our human nature. Elated at his own excellence, Lucifer feels hurt at such a command. The very thought that he must humble himself in the presence of Mary makes him indignant. He thinks that if God is to unite Himself to one of His creatures, none of them deserves that honor as much as he; and thus, having lifted up his heart in the admiration of his beauty, this same beauty caused him to lose his wisdom. "And thy heart was lifted up with thy beauty; thou hast lost thy wisdom in thy beauty." (Ezech. xxviii. 17.)

He does more than refuse submission to God; he prevents others from obeying Him, and convinces a great many that the decree which will procure so much glory for human nature is injurious to the angelical nature. O the baneful effect of scandal when it is given by those who are obliged by the very nature of their calling to give good example! The dragon, says St. John, took away in its rebellion against God the third part of the stars of heaven.

Whither will he precipitate himself with those whom he has seduced? Into that abyss of inextinguishable fire prepared for him and for the accomplices of his pride. "Into eternal fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh, the dreadful fall! Whence does he fall? Whither does he fall? On that day for the first time was accomplished the oracle: "He that exalteth himself shall be humbled." O Priest, be on your guard against pride. *Altiorem locum sortitus es, non tutiorem.* (St. Ber. de Consid.) You will never be secure save by imitating the humility of St. Michael.

II. St. Michael is indignant at the outrage offered the sovereign Lord. He exclaims: Who is like unto God? Who can refuse to obey His commands? His fidelity strengthens that of the good angels. With him they stand, repeating the cry, who is like unto God! They fight against Lucifer and are victorious. Their trial is ended, they are now confirmed in grace. God unveils before their eyes the magnificence of His charms; they see Him face to face; they possess Him. What a recompense, what a happiness for all, but particularly for the chief of the celestial host! St. Michael is established over all the princes of heaven, leader of God's people, defender of the Church, protector of the Catholic priesthood, for which he will fight until the end of time. Numberless altars and churches will be consecrated and numerous associations created in honor of St. Michael. His name, in our sacred liturgy, will be invoked next to that of the Queen of the universe. How glorious he will appear on the Last Day, when, having vanquished Antichrist, he will ascend to heaven in company with all the elect! Behold his reward for having humbled himself before God.

Second Point.—Pride is the cause of the fall, and humility of the exaltation.

I. One will fall when he is weakness itself, and has to struggle against an invincible power. First of all, there is nothing so unsteady as the proud man. David addressed to God the following prayer: "Let not the foot of pride come to me." (Ps. xxxv. 12.) My foot can not be steady upon unsteady sand. Upon what can a man who is a victim to pride rely? Upon himself. In what does he place his trust? In himself. This is the characteristic of this vice, which Jesus Christ described in one word, "They trusted in themselves." (Luke, xviii. 9.) Now what is man of himself if not simply vanity and nothingness? "If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." (Gal. vi. 3.) "Man is like to vanity." (Ps. cxliii. 4.) "My substance is as nothing before Thee." (Ps. xxxviii. 6.) Lucifer forsook truth for untruth. Such was the sole cause of his fall. "He stood not in the truth." (John, viii. 44.) St. Bernard asks

what is the truth; and he answers: It is the opinion he should have of himself. Of myself I am nothing; I owe it to God if I am anything; glory to God, therefore, for everything; nothing is due to me.

But were the proud man as strong as he is weak, could he resist the infinite power that opposes him? "God resisteth the proud." (1 Pet. v. 5.) God has declared that He would cede His glory to no one. (Is. xlii. 8.) Will He not confound the rash man who attempts to rob Him of it?

II. The reasons which show that the proud must fall demonstrate that the humble shall be exalted. The same God who resisteth the proud gives His grace to the humble. What grace will He give them? The grace of submission to His divine will, the grace of perseverance, etc. All graces are theirs. God sustains them; they have nothing to fear, God Himself is their protector. "God is the keeper of little ones." (Ps. cxiv. 6.) Truth, that is, the intuitive and clear knowledge they have of their own nothingness, makes them depend on God alone, and thus they are preserved from any spiritual wreck which might overtake them. "Truth shall deliver you." (John, viii. 32.) Their confidence is a homage rendered to the power, goodness, and fidelity of the Lord. This confidence pleases Him not a little, and it draws down upon them all the benedictions of His love. *Humilem Deus protegit et liberat; humilem diligit et consolatur; humili homini se inclinat, humili largitur gratiam magnam, et post ejus depressionem levat ad gloriam.* (Im. l. ii. ch. 2.) Behold the greatest exaltation as a reward for the virtue of humility.

Third Point.—How shall we be able to avoid the punishment of the proud, and obtain the reward of the humble? Let our rule of conduct be the war cry of St. Michael: *Who is like unto God!* Let us also deserve the special protection of this powerful archangel.

True humility has for its foundation the knowledge of God and of one's self. Does the spirit of error incite us to vainglory? Let us answer with St. Michael: *Who is like unto God!* What am I, what are all creatures in comparison with God? Am I tempted to give way to murmuring or impatience? *Who is like unto God!* Which is the more just, that God should do His will, or that I should do mine? He is my King, should I not obey Him? He is my Father, should I not love Him? Does inclination to pleasure tend to seduce me? *Who is like unto God!* Who, if not Thou, O Supreme Good, can satisfy the desires of my soul, the cravings of my heart? The same words will excite us to respect and fervor when we are approaching the altar or about to begin our office. *Who is like unto God!*

Not, however, by His example only does St. Michael wish to help us priests, who are in a manner his soldiers, sustaining the same cause, fighting the same enemies. Great is the help we shall obtain from him if we have recourse to his protection. He it is who presents to God our prayers and our sacrifices. *Stetit angelus juxta aram templi, habens thuribulum aureum in manu sua.* (Brev.) He protects us at death, receives our souls, conducts them into heaven. *Archangele Michael, constitui te . . . . super omnes animas suscipiendas.* (Ibid.) *Signifer sanctus Michael repraesentet eas in lucem sanctam.* (Miss. Def.) What will they ask for me, when I shall be near my end? *Suscipiat eum sanctus Michael . . . . qui militiae coelestis meruit principatum.* (Rit. Comm. ani.)

Let us venerate St. Michael as the truest living image of the Divinity, the richest expression of God's greatness. Let us invoke him often, especially at the foot of the altar, when we humble ourselves by a public confession of our faults. *Confiteor.* St. Laurence Justinian, recommends devotion to St. Michael in the following language: *Agnoscant singuli protectorem suum, illum laudibus efferant, frequentent precibus, votis amplectantur, devotione inclinent, et per emendationem vitae laetificent; non enim poterit orantes despicere, repellere confidentes, declinare amantes, quippe cum defendat humiles, pudicos diligat, dirigat innocentes, custodiat vitam, regat in via, perducat in patriam.* (Serm. de S. Mich.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The pride of Lucifer punished, the humility of St. Michael rewarded. Lucifer, elated over his own excellence, refuses to humble himself before a God made man. In his revolt he caused the fall of a great number of angels, and with them he himself fell into a fiery abyss, prepared for him and his accomplices. St. Michael exclaims: *Who is like to God!* His fidelity strengthens that of the good angels. What is his magnificent reward?

Second Point.—Pride prepares for the fall, humility for the exaltation. One will fall if he is weak, on the one hand, and, on the other, is attacked by an invincible power. Nothing is feebler than the proud man, for he depends upon himself alone, and he is naught but vanity. The same God who resisteth the proud gives His grace to the humble, and is there anything we can not do when we have God to protect and sustain us?

Third Point.—What should we do to avoid the punishment of the proud, and obtain the reward of the humble? Adopt the war cry of St. Michael: *Who is like to God!* Let us repeat it

when tempted by vainglory, impatience, etc., when inclination to pleasure menaces us. We may, moreover, expect much help from St. Michael if we are faithful to honor him and invoke his intercession.

October 2.—The Holy Guardian Angels.

MEDITATION CXXXIII.

THE MINISTRY OF THESE SPIRITS.

1.—*Goodness of God in Sending Angels to Guard Us.*
2.—*Charity of Our Guardian Angels.*

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself a multitude of angels on earth, busily engaged in rendering all sorts of services to men, to their souls, and to their bodies. Behold near you the angel whom God appointed to be your guardian, and together with him adore the majesty of the Lord.

Second Prelude.—Let us ask for grace to understand the blessings we receive from God through the ministry of the angels, and to accomplish faithfully the duties which those blessings impose on us.

First Point.—Goodness of God in sending angels to guard us. How great, through the mercy of God and his own destiny is man; how small when we consider his weakness and miseries! St. Jerome, explaining the words of Jesus Christ, "Their angels always see the face of My Father" (Matt. viii. 10), says: *Magna dignitas animarum, ut unaquaeque habeat, ab ortu nativitatis, in custodiam sui angelum deputatum.* (Lib. iii., Comm. in Cap. xviii. Mat.) The Church to-day draws our attention to this unspeakable favor, almost universally forgotten: *Deus, qui ineffabili proventia sanctos angelos tuos ad nostram custodiam mittere dignaris.*

A powerful king sees a child of mean birth abandoned by all, destitute of resource, and commands one of the princes of his court to take him under his protection, to educate him with the greatest care, to be at his side day and night. Has not the monarch the heart of a father for that child? His extraordinary goodness toward him makes it appear that he has destined him for a high rank, and this is an image of what God does for us through the ministry of the angels. What are we of ourselves? What can we do for ourselves? What was our condition when we came into the world? Incomprehensible charity! God, says St. Bernard, was

not satisfied with sending us His Son and His Holy Spirit; in order that everything in heaven might help to our happiness, He sent angels to serve us; for this, as St. Paul teaches, is the office they have to fulfil toward us. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister to those who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" (Heb. i. 14.)

St. Bernard, at this, can not contain his admiration. He invites us to meditate on the subject in the following language: *Angelis suis mandavit de te! Mira dignatio! et vere magna dilectio charitatis! Quis enim, quibus, de quo, quid mandavit, studiose consideremus, fratres; diligenter commendemus memoriae hoc tam grande mandatum.* He who sends is God, the sovereign, self-sufficient God. Those whom He sends are His angels, those spirits so pure, so holy, so superior in power to all the kings of the earth: *Angelis suis.* It was not an exhortation, it was an order He gave them: *Mandavit.* What did He command them to do? Not simply to watch over the welfare of empires, but to watch over each individual: *De te;* to protect us who are dust and nothingness, who are ungrateful, perfidious sinners. How far should they exercise their vigilance? In every position of life, and in all circumstances; nay, beyond the grave they will be our friends. *Ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis.* If necessary, they shall carry you in their arms. "In their hands they shall bear thee up," like a child whom they wish to keep from falling, "lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." How full of comfort is all this. St. Bernard adds: *Adsunt igitur, et adsunt tibi: non modo tecum, sed etiam pro te; adsunt ut protegant, adsunt ut prosint.* (In ps. qui. habitat.) What, then, is man, O Lord, that Thou shouldst love him to such excess as to place by his side a prince of Thy court, whom Thou hast commanded to earnestly see after all his interests?

Second Point.—Charity of our guardian angels. Not to speak of the services they render us in temporal matters, how great is their solicitude that we obtain the inheritance of salvation! They show us the way that leads to heaven, remove all obstacles and procure for us the necessary means. How is it that we are so little touched by their generosity?

I. Providence has determined for each of us a particular career in this world, a particular place in the eternal kingdom. "Behold I will send My angel, who shall go before thee and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place which I have prepared." (Ex. xxiii. 20.) As the spirits of the first choirs transmit light and love to those inferior to them in the celestial hierarchy, so our good angels give us a knowledge of what is really good, and encourage us to embrace all good. When we feel inclined to detach

ourselves from creatures, to give ourselves more fully to God, these are inspirations which come to us through our charitable guides. There is nothing more ingenious than his zeal for our sanctification. At times he proposes to us the example of Jesus Christ, or of those saints whose dispositions come nearer to our own; at others, he portrays for us, in vivid colors, the shortness of life, the hour of death, eternity, etc.; again he displays before our eyes the beauties of virtue, the charms of peace, which is the reward of a good conscience, the rewards promised for constant fidelity. St. Bernard represents to us this prince of heaven disguised as a servant, following our soul step by step, in order to admonish or to encourage it unceasingly. St. Louis of Grenada looks upon our guardian angels as upon tender fathers entirely devoted to the welfare of their children, or as rich people who help the poor, or as doctors who instruct the ignorant.

II. The guardian angel removes the obstacles which stand in the way of salvation. Be there a dangerous occasion in our path, he urges us to shun it, using a sort of violence toward us, as the Scripture tells us in the case of Loth: "They took his hand . . . and they brought him forth." (Gen. xix. 16.) Should we happen to be under the influence of spiritual languor, sadness, or despondency, our guardian angel comforts us, filling our souls with a spiritual unction which heals them. The most dreadful obstacle to our salvation consists in the desperate war which the spirits of darkness wage against us. They can not, in their jealousy, become reconciled to the love that God bears us, and the glory which He has in store for us: *Ardens invidia pellere nititur, quos coelo Deus advocat.* However, we should have confidence; our heavenly friend is more earnest in defending us than the evil spirits in their efforts to destroy our souls. He does for his charge what Raphael did for Tobias. He chains down the evil ones or banishes them far from us. This is why the prophet, after saying: "He has given His angels command over thee," adds the following words to strengthen our courage: "Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk, and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon." (Ps. xc. 13.) This lion and dragon, this asp and this basilisk, are the powers of hell, which we overcome by the assistance of our guardian angels.

III. They assist still more directly in the work of our salvation by the means of sanctification which they procure for us, and principally by praying for us, and offering our prayers to God. Other angels intercede for us through the effect of a charity which is common to them all, and unite together all the children of God. But apart from this motive, our guardian angels are interested in

our welfare, in virtue of the obligation attached to their ministry, and of the ardent zeal wherewith the Lord filled them when He confided us to their protection; the Scripture says that in establishing them His ministers, He made them active as a flame of fire. "He that maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire." (Heb. i. 7.) They are, at one and the same time, near God, whom they behold, relishing the sweetness of His possession, and near us also, considering our dangers and miseries. This is why, being full of compassion for us, they cease not to offer fervent prayers to God for our sanctification.

They also offer our prayers to God. Let us listen to the apostle St. John: "And another angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel." (Apoc. viii. 3, 4.) Raphael made the following relation to Tobias: "When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner, and hide the dead by day in thy house, and bury them by night, I offered thy prayer to the Lord." (Tob. xii. 12.) Ah, how blest we are, exclaims Bossuet, in having with God friends who are so devoted to us! They are not satisfied with placing our requests at the foot of His throne; they carry thither our good works, those acts of charity toward the poor and the sick, that hidden alms and that insult forgiven, that fasting, that mortification. They gather up our very thoughts and desires, asking, praying that they may receive a reward. But ah, who can tell how joyfully they present to God the tears of repentant sinners, and the sufferings borne with patience and humility for His sake?

Finally, at the hour of death, during those last struggles when our eternal fate is on the point of being decided, they display greater vigilance and solicitude to repress the fury of our enemies and to create in us the spirit of compunction, of penance, and of fervor. Their mission is continued even beyond the grave. If we are condemned to the last and painful expiations of purgatory, they will not fail to visit and comfort us; they will solicit prayers in our behalf, inspire fervent souls with the thought of assisting us, and negotiate with Almighty God the great affair of our deliverance. What have we done so far in the way of acknowledgment of the Lord's goodness, and of that zeal so pure, so tender, and so constant, of the angel whom He has given us as our guardian? Let us bewail our ingratitude and begin, this very day, to make reparation for it.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—God's goodness in sending angels to be our guardians. The Church on this day draws our attention to a divine favor which to her appears to be ineffable: *Deus qui ineffabili providentia.* O incomprehensible charity! God was not satisfied with sending us His Son and His Holy Spirit. He sent us also His angels to serve us. "He has given His angels command over thee." He who sends is God; those whom He sends are princes of His court. To whom and for what purpose does He send them? Each of those words ought to be deeply considered.

Second Point.—Charity of the angels in watching over us. Let us not speak of the natural order, but of the order of salvation. They show us the way to it, remove all obstacles, procure us the means to walk in it safely. They give us the knowledge of that which is the true good, and help us by their holy inspirations to embrace the same. They shield us from sin, show us where danger lurks, strengthen us in times of weakness, console us in our afflictions, defend us against the devil. They assist more directly in our salvation by praying for us and offering our supplications to God. At the hour of death they display greater vigilance and solicitude, in order to render us victorious in our last struggle. Their charity accompanies us even beyond the grave; they will visit and comfort us in purgatory, they will solicit prayers in our behalf, and by every means will hasten the time of our entrance into the mansions of God's glory.

MEDITATION CXXXIV.

OUR DUTIES TOWARD OUR GUARDIAN ANGELS—RESPECT, GRATITUDE, AND CONFIDENCE.

1.—*General Duties Common to All the Faithful.*
2.—*Particular Duties of Priests and Pastors.*

First Point.—General duties of all the faithful toward their guardian angels. These are three, according to St. Bernard: Respect, gratitude, and confidence. We owe our good angel respect, because of his presence; gratitude, because of the services he renders us; and confidence, because of his most reliable and effectual protection. *Reverentiam pro praesentia, devotionem pro benevolentia, fiduciam pro custodia.*

I. Respect. God Himself commanded it. "Take notice of him and do not think him one to be contemned," and the sublime motive of the commandment He assigns, in saying: "My name is in him." (Exod. xxiii. 21.) Such, in fact, is the excellence and dignity of the angel, that he is the noblest and truest expression of the Divinity. He is the first ray of God's beauty, the first work of His hands, the first masterpiece of His wisdom. St. John having beheld him who had revealed to him so many mysteries, fell prostrate to adore him, thinking that he was the Son of God Himself. St. Anselm asserts, that if an angel were to make himself visible in all his glory, in place of the sun, he would darken by his splendor as many suns (if they were in existence) as there are stars in the firmament.

The majesty surrounding a king impresses all those who approach him; what then should be our respect in presence of a prince of heaven—of one so far superior to all the potentates of earth? For, says St. Bernard, wherever you may chance to be, in the church, or in the house, or in public places, either alone, or in company, your guardian angel is near you. Do not do in his presence what you would not dare do before me. *Tu ne audeas, illo praesente, quod, vidente me, non auderes?* Do you question his presence because you do not see him? The testimony of our eyes is not the surest nor the only evidence we have of the presence of things. This sense does not extend its power to spiritual objects, neither are all the corporal objects subject to its domain. *Vide quia non solo visu rerum praesentia comprobatur.* Is not the vision of faith surer than that of our eyes? Walk, therefore, cautiously, since your angel sees you. *Caute ambula, ut videlicet cui adsunt angeli.* (In. Ps. Qui. habitat.)

II. To respect you should join love and gratitude. When the angel of the Hebrew people had divided the waters of the Red Sea, and engulfed the Egyptians into depths, he continued, according to God's command, to assist them until he had established them in the Promised Land. So also does our good angel assist us. When we have escaped, through the waters of baptism, the slavery of the powers of hell, this zealous protector accompanies us through the desert of this life, which we have to traverse in order to reach heaven. At times, like a mysterious cloud, he moderates the violence of our passions, at other times, like a bright fire, he enlightens the dark night of our ignorance. For us he causes the manna of heavenly consolations to come down; he sweetens the bitter waters of penance. He teaches us the law of God and strives to engrave it on the living table of our hearts.

To the Lord, it is true, I am indebted for all these goods. "What shall I return to the Lord?" I should have no angel to serve me had not this good Master given him to me. "He has given His angels command over thee." Glory to be God who has given this command. But I should also be thankful to him who executes it with so much charity. It is in imitation of divine goodness that the angels adopt toward us inclinations of such wonderful benevolence. They clearly see into the mysteries of the Incarnation, of the Redemption and all the others connected with them. If they had a life and blood to offer for us, how gladly would they give up both for us! Ah, to be ungrateful toward such friends would certainly be a crime!

Young Tobias knew not what expression of gratitude to offer his heavenly guide. "Father, what wages shall we give him, or what may be worthy of his benefits? He conducted me and brought me safe again . . . we are filled with all good things through him." (Tob. xii. 2, 3.) And what shall I do in return for all the blessings which I owe to my guardian? I shall love him tenderly, shall hear his words, shall be docile to his inspirations; I shall avoid whatever might displease his holiness; I shall practise the virtues which are dear to him: purity, humility, zeal, conformity to the will of God.

III. I shall place my confidence in him. *Fiduciam pro custodia.* If I had for a friend one whom I justly thought to be the most enlightened, the most faithful and powerful of all men, would I not rely upon him with entire security? But such are our guardians, says St. Bernard. *Prudentes sunt, fideles sunt, potentes sunt.* They can not be led astray, for they draw their knowledge from the very source of truth. "They always see the face of the Father." Much less would they be willing to deceive us, for they are friends of unshakeable faithfulness. Let us think of the threefold tie which unites them to us. They love us for the sake of God, knowing how much He loves us; they love us for ourselves, seeing in us the image of the Divinity; they love us for themselves, considering us as their brethren, and their future associates in the kingdom of heaven. Neither is power wanting to them any more than science and love, and with the virtue they receive from above one of them alone can use more power for our sanctification than all the devils together for our loss. For this reason it is that Tertullian said that through the help of the angels, the power of the devil is subject to the power of man. Let us again hear St. Bernard: *Quid sub tantis custodibus timeamus? . . . Tantum sequamur eos, adhaereamus eis, et in protectione Dei coeli commoremur. Quoties ergo gravissima cernitur urgere tentatio, et tribulatio vehemens imminere,*

invoca custodem tuum, ductorem tuum, adjutorem tuum. . . .Inclama eum, et dic: Domine, salva nos, perimus. (Ibid.)

Second Point.—Particular duties of priests and pastors toward the guardian angels. Which are these duties, and in what do they consist?

I. The numerous and honorable relations which we have with these holy spirits, and the great assistance we receive from them as priests and pastors are motives of devotion toward them which regard us alone.

It might be said that the militia of heaven is but one with that of earth. Let us see how many things are common to the priest as pastor, and to the guardian angel. "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge . . . because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts." (Mal. ii. 7.) The name is one and the same; the mission is also one, viz., in regard to God, to sing His praises, to propagate and sustain His worship; with regard to men to purify, enlighten, and defend them; their ministry is, as it were, one, a ministry of love, of truth, of reconciliation, of peace. The angels, however, do not exercise their ministry through the medium of the senses; the Catholic priesthood, seconding their invisible operation, and being seconded by it, is the visible dispenser of the mysteries of God. The priest speaks to the ear, the angel acts immediately on the intelligence and the heart. Through the priest and the angel the work of sanctification is accomplished.

On this account the ministers of the Lord are the special objects of angelical protection. Because of their zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, they take a lively interest in us. How useful is their assistance when we announce the word of God, when we are on the altar, in the confessional, near the sick and the dying! How many graces of preservation have we not received through them in the midst of great dangers? How often have they not illuminated our minds in most embarrassing circumstances? How many times did we not say to ourselves under the influence of anxiety, or perhaps of despondency: What shall be done? How can I see the way out of this difficulty? And our guardian came to the rescue and delivered us, as Peter was delivered out of prison. If there be the same relation between benefactions and love as there is between wood and fire, there are no persons who should love the angels so much as priests and pastors. How shall we show that we love them?

II. Let us not forget to honor them by those general duties common to all, or which we have meditated upon. Another mode of expressing our love which would be most acceptable to them, would be to imitate them, since they are perfect models of sacerdotal

and pastoral virtues: recollection, meekness, patience, devotedness. Our duty is to show the faithful how to honor them and to make up for the indifference of others. Who think of the holy angels and of our happiness in having one of them for our guardian? Speak often on this interesting subject. Recommend this devotion to the children, to the young, to persons of all ages, especially in the time of temptation. Go in spirit to the countries inhabited by heretics and infidels, to the great centers of population; go through those countless multitudes. How many guardian angels among them, ignored or forgotten? Venerate them, but render special homage to the angels of your parish, and of the souls intrusted to your care. Pray to them, you pastor, to watch with you over your flock, to call you to the sick. The good priest makes it a practice to salute the guardian angels of his penitents in the confessional, and in the pulpit, and while teaching catechism, to salute those of his hearers. He, moreover, in his prayers, functions, administration of the sacraments, visits, does nothing save in union with these powerful auxiliaries. Finally he repeats often himself, and directs those under his care to repeat this pious invocation: *Angele Dei, qui custos es mei, me tibi commissum pietate superna, illumina, custodi, rege et guberna.* Examine in what manner you may have been wanting in devotion toward the guardian angels, and make proper resolutions.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point..—General duties common to all toward our guardian angel. According to St. Bernard, these are respect, gratitude, confidence. *Reverentiam pro praesentia, devotionem pro benevolentia, fiduciam pro custodia.* I. Respect. God commands it. Take notice of him; do not think him one to be contemned. And My name is in him. Do not, says St. Bernard, do in his presence what you would not dare do before me. II. Gratitude. He renders to us so many services, and with so great a charity. The young Tobias knew not what mark of gratitude he could give to his guide. And what shall I do to thank my guardian angel? III. Confidence. He is wise, enlightened, faithful, devoted, mighty. What have I to fear under his guidance?

Second Point.—Special duties of priests and pastors toward their guardian angels. Our relations with them are many and most honorable. Same mission regarding to God. Regarding to men. The priest speaks to the ear, the angels act on the intelligence and the heart. Through their mutual intercourse, the work of sanctification is accomplished. In a special manner we are under

the influence of angelical protection. They take the most lively interest in the success of our labors. If we stop to think of the blessings we receive we will at once concede that priests and pastors, above all others, should have an unbounded love for their guardian angels. Let us imitate them as much as we can. Let us teach the faithful how to honor them. Let us make up for the too prevalent indifference of men. Let us often recite and teach others to recite the admirable invocation: *Angele Dei qui custos es mei,* etc.

October 4.—St. Francis of Assisi.

MEDITATION CXXXV.

SELF-DENIAL IN ITS PERFECTION.

This saint was born at Assisi, a town of Ombria, in 1182. In his youth he was very fond of pleasures and riches, but to counteract those evil inclinations, God had inspired him with a tender affection for the poor, and his alms obtained for him the grace to gain great victories over the world and over himself. Having attained his twenty-fifth year, he did something really heroic, something which obtained grace for him to enter the way that subsequently led him on to the most sublime perfection.

His father, who was a merchant, and strongly attached to the goods of earth, unable to understand or put up with his son's extraordinary liberality toward the poor, desired him to give up, in presence of the bishop, all title to succession. Francis readily consented, and, filled with the most pious and fervent inspirations, he actually took off his clothes and placed them at his father's feet, saying to him with much sweetness and calmness: "Hitherto I have called you my father; henceforth I shall say with greater confidence: 'Our Father, who art in heaven.'" That day was the beginning of a complete transformation; ever afterward his life was truly marvelous. He associated to himself companions of his poverty, with whom he founded the Order of Friars Minor. Ten years later he held the famous chapter of the *mats*,[1] at which they counted five thousand Religious, although a certain number of members had remained in each of their respective convents. He died on October 12, 1226, in the forty-fifth year of his age, and was canonized on July 10, 1228.

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[1] This chapter was so named, because the Religious who attended it dwelt in cabins made of mats.

The good priest entering upon his mission generously renounced everything in order to consecrate himself to Jesus Christ, and the first reward of the sacrifice is to find in Jesus Christ one hundredfold more than what was given up for His sake. St. Francis of Assisi placed before our eyes:

1.—*Evangelical Self-denial, Practised in all its Perfections.*
2.—*The Promise of the One Hundredfold Accomplished in its Fullest Sense.*

First Point.—St. Francis practised evangelical self-denial in all its perfection. Satan, with the help of three passions, love of riches, love of honor, and love of pleasure, ravages the world, outrages God and destroys souls: with the help of the three virtues, love of poverty, love of contempt, and love of sufferings, Jesus Christ and His saints glorify God, destroy the work of Satan, and save souls. These evangelical virtues shone conspicuously in St. Francis of Assisi.

I. Love of poverty. Bossuet has said of our saint that he was the most fervent, the most frenzied, and if he dared so to speak, the most desperate lover of poverty. He loved it and caused it to be loved.

In his youth he had been remarked for a fondness of dress and of magnificence. Yet he renounced a life of pleasure and of opulence for a life of the most absolute destitution. Before taking this determination he had to strive in different ways, nay, against the holy joy he felt in helping the indigent. He prized the happiness of eating the bread of alms with Jesus Christ as being far greater than that of nourishing Jesus Christ in the person of the poor. God made man, was born, lived and died destitute of everything, having naught whereupon to lay His head! O holy poverty, O priceless treasure! No riches can be compared with thee!

He called poverty his lady, his queen, his mother, his spouse, and he earnestly asked it of God. The following was his favorite prayer: Lord Jesus, show me the ways of poverty. Should not this virtue so dear to Thy heart be likewise dear to mine? Have mercy on me, for I love it so passionately that without it I cannot live. Mark me with its seal. Let it be my privilege and that of my brethren to possess nothing, to live by alms, and to be so reserved in the use we make of them, that we may never be without experiencing some effects of holy poverty.

If virtues had a human form, says Father Nouet, evangelical poverty should have assumed the body, the mind, the birth, the life and death of St. Francis. His *birth,* for he was born in a stable;

his *death*, for before expiring he had his clothes taken off, to assume an old torn habit, and stretched himself on ashes. His *life*, for after renouncing his paternal inheritance, he owned nothing he could call his own. His *body*, for he treated it as a slave to whom he refused everything that was not absolutely necessary for his subsistence; his *spirit*, for it was directly opposed to that of covetousness. The covetous man is jealous of whoever is richer than himself. St. Francis was jealous of every poor person who surpassed him in indigence. The covetous man never feels that he has enough. Francis found always that he had too much; the poorer he was the more contented he was. He loved poverty and received the gift of making it loved by others.

In city and country he repeated everywhere the first words of Jesus Christ in His discourse on the mountain. "Blessed are the poor!" Blessed is he who loves nothing in the world save for God's sake! Still more blessed is he who possesses nothing therein! His words and example produce such an impression, that there assembles around him a whole people, as it were, made up of persons who have embraced voluntary poverty. With their assistance he founds a society to which he gives as a foundation the poverty of Jesus Christ, promising that the same will enjoy the support of Heaven and abundant benedictions as long as poverty shall flourish in its bosom. How many precautions he used to maintain therein perfect detachment from all things of earth! Nay, in the very temple which they were to raise to the honor of God, he willed that everything should breathe simplicity, modesty, poverty. Always patient and meek, he showed the greatest severity toward those who would attempt to weaken the spirit of holy poverty among his religious family.

II. His love of being despised. This is the perfection of humility, in which, says St. Augustine, that poverty of spirit principally consists. St. Francis knew well that in embracing a mode of life entirely opposed to the wisdom of the world he was exposing himself to contempt. In fact, the people of Assisi, seeing him disfigured, dressed in so strange a manner, follow him through the streets, laughing him to scorn as though he were a fool; his father has him taken to prison, and loaded with chains as if he were a dangerous maniac. Like Jesus Christ, he thirsted after reproaches, and like Him he was filled with them. Later on, he saw himself the object of universal admiration because of his miracles; but on this account he became more humble in his own eyes. When they mentioned the great things he accomplished he answered like Mary to Elizabeth: "He looked down upon the lowliness." If God made use of Him, it was simply because He found no one as vile,

as weak, as he, and consequently so fitted to bring into relief the skill of the Workman through the worthlessness of the instrument He employs.

He debases himself far below everybody and everything, considering himself an unworthy sinner, capable of committing every crime if the hand of God did not sustain him. The more graces he receives the more he bewails his ingratitude, being convinced that others would turn them to greater advantage.

III. Love of sufferings. Divine charity had so inflamed his heart after his conversion that the Passion of Jesus Christ was the ordinary subject of his thoughts. He ardently desired to return to Him life for life. Thrice did he seek the occasion to die a martyr's death among the infidels, and consoled himself at the refusal of this favor, by making his body a victim of penance. Was there any kind of torture he did not resort to to crucify his flesh? He lies down on hard stones, as if the bare ground was too soft for him; he constantly wears about him a coarse piece of hair-cloth; rolls himself in the snow and among thorns; each year he keeps four lenten seasons, eating nothing but the coarsest food, with which he would at times mix ashes. His senses may murmur, nature may complain, St. Francis thinks only of imitating Jesus' sufferings. He lives for nothing but the cross. Continually contemplating the Saviour covered with wounds he can not resolve to live without wounds. His desire shall be granted. Behold him in a lonely desert. He complains that men who shed the blood of his Master continue to refuse to shed that of his servant. Suddenly he receives in his body the impression of the five wounds of Jesus Christ, which makes of him a living victim and a perfect image of the Man of sorrows. Did man ever see evangelical self-abnegation practised to such perfection? Let us see how perfectly it was rewarded even on earth.

Second Point.—The promises of the one hundredfold accomplished admirably in favor of St. Francis. He was rich in his indigence, happy in his sufferings, honored in his humiliations.

I. St. Francis found abundance in his indigence. Jesus Christ asked His apostles on the eve of His death: "When I sent you without purse and scrip and shoes, did you want anything?" Their answer was unanimous: "But they said, nothing." (Luke, xxii. 35, 36.) Francis is a poor, obscure man, without credit, without authority; but because he is one of the poor of Jesus Christ, his poverty shall be fruitful, and will provide him with a fund more secure and solid than all the treasures of earth. Convents are built for him, provisions pour in for the support of his numerous family. He is forced rather to refuse the superfluities than to

seek the necessaries of life; he is more occupied in guarding his children against the allurements of riches than in mitigating the rigors of the poverty which they have embraced. The poor of Jesus Christ, says St. Bernard, are by far the richer, since Providence gives them all they need and since they wish for nothing more.

II. In the midst of sufferings he found the source of veritable delights. People think that the cross of Jesus Christ makes saints; it also gives happiness. The heart, says Salvien, is the seat of happiness; man is happy as soon as he is what he wishes to be. Never had pleasure as much attraction for the heart of a worldling as sufferings had for the heart of St. Francis of Assisi. Was there on earth a man as well pleased with his lot as this poor Francis, who in his desert, in the midst of all his afflictions, being inebriated with joy, in the midst of all his troubles, spent entire nights repeating: "My God and my all! I possess my God, and in Him I possess everything." He looked for happiness in that which separated him entirely from creatures, and united him more intimately to God. He found Him, and would never tire of repeating: "My God and my all," and while so saying his heart would burst out into sighs, his eyes pouring forth streams of tears. During his contemplation, in the midst of his labors, at every hour, in every place, he repeated and with renewed transports of joy: "O my all, O my God! O my God and my all!"

III. He found immense glory in humiliations. It is said of Solomon that he was glorified above all other kings on account of his wisdom and his riches. St. Francis of Assisi was glorified among all the saints through his real and apparent poverty. As he seeks to be despised by the world so does the world seek to honor him What is he going to ask the sultan of Egypt, the sworn enemy of the Christians? The least he expects is to be treated by him as Jesus was by Herod. Instead of this, he is admired by him and receives respect rather than reproaches. Often, upon returning home to his country, he would be welcomed by great concourses of clergy and people, with rejoicings, cheerings, and songs of gladness. They press upon him, desirous of touching his garments, of kissing his feet. His companions shared these honors with him. The more, after his example, they sought to be despised, the more the world bestowed tokens of respect and esteem upon them. Could it be otherwise at sight of the extraordinary gifts which Heaven caused to shine in the father and his children? So it is, O my God, that Thou dost hasten to reward generous souls. They reserve nothing for themselves through the sacrifices which they make, and Thou dost set no limits to Thy love. Extinguish within our hearts all affections for things of earth; teach us to stifle our

love of self, that we may love Thee, and Thee alone! We shall then, like Francis, depend entirely upon Thee, and shall repeat with him exultingly: "O my God! O my all!"

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.— St. Francis practised evangelical self-abnegation in all its perfection. Perfect abnegation of self contains the perfection of three virtues.

I. Love of poverty. St. Francis possessed it in such a high degree that he preferred it to the pleasure of helping the poor; he willed rather to eat the bread of alms with Jesus Christ, than to give Him food in the persons of the indigent. His favorite prayer was: Lord, show me the ways of poverty; so passionately do I love it, that without it I can not live. He loved poverty, and received the gift of communicating the love of it to others.

II. The love of contempt. This is the perfection of humility. St. Francis, like his Master, hungered after reproaches and was overwhelmed with them. When mocked and insulted, he felt inexpressible joy; the more they honored him, the more contemptible he felt himself to be.

III. The love of sufferings. The Passion of Jesus Christ was the continual object of his thoughts. He was inflamed with a desire to return to Him life for life. Was there any kind of torture which he did not contrive in order to crucify his flesh? He is entitled to say with St. Paul: "I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus on my body."

Second Point.—The promises of the one hundredfold admirably accomplished in St. Francis. He found abundance in destitution. His poverty became for him a more solid, certain fund than all the treasures of the world; he was more busily engaged in refusing superfluities than in seeking necessities. He took great delight in the midst of sufferings. Alone in his deserts and solitudes he spent whole nights in repeating: "My God and my all!" And in so saying his heart was inundated with joy. He found glory in humiliation. What man was ever as much honored as he? The more he sought to be despised by the world, so much the more did the world multiply its tokens of respect and veneration toward him.

October 15.—St. Teresa.

MEDITATION CXXXVI.

EMINENT GRACES OF THE SAINT.

This illustrious saint was born at Avila, a city of Spain, on March 28, 1515. The hearing of *The Lives of the Saints,* which was read every day in common in the family of her virtuous parents, inspired her from a most tender age with an ardent desire to die for Jesus Christ. Having attempted, without success, to go among the Moors in order to suffer martyrdom, she resolved to live as a hermit, as far as she could, in the house of her parents. At the age of twelve she lost her mother, and soon afterward became passionately fond of reading frivolous books, which might have caused her ruin had she not been sent to a convent boarding school. Here God showed her the abyss from which He had saved her, and inspired her to go to the house of the Carmelites of Avila, where she took the habit on November 21, 1536, at the age of twenty-one years. The Order of Carmelites had lost much of its primitive fervor. Teresa received from Heaven the mission of reforming it. She began by reforming the convents for women, and soon after, being encouraged by previous success, and with the co-operation of St. John of the Cross, she undertook to establish the same reformation in the convents for men. God blessed her efforts, and after experiencing much opposition, she had the consolation of seeing the rule adopted by thirty-two monasteries, which spread abroad the odor of the purest virtues. She died in 1582, and was canonized in 1621.

We shall apply to Teresa the words of Isaias: "I will deal confidently, and I will not fear, because the Lord is my strength and my praise." (Is. xii. 2.)

1.—*Her Courage Confounds Our Sluggishness.*
2.—*Her Success Confounds Our Diffidence.*

First Point.—The courage of St. Teresa confounds our sluggishness. Courage is measured by the greatness of the enterprises we undertake, and by the difficulties which they overcome. St. Teresa has nothing in view than to raise herself to eminent holiness, and to lead a great many souls to the same; but in order to realize these two noble purposes the obstacles which presented

themselves seemed to be unsurmountable. In herself she saw inclinations well adapted to preclude all hope of attaining this degree of holiness, and from those around her she experienced contradictions well apt to make her give up the work of their sanctification. With God's grace and by constancy she triumphed over every obstacle.

I. From her childhood she had felt an ardent desire to sacrifice her life for the God who had loved her so much as to die for her. But, strange mixture of strength and weakness! she would have had courage to die a martyr, and yet was unable to practise vigilance. She would cheerfully have given up her blood for Jesus Christ, and yet refused to deprive herself, for love of Him, of certain natural gratifications. She would have been lost if the spell had lasted. The heart of Teresa, destined to be so replenished with divine love as to deserve for her the appellation of the seraphic virgin, that heart was about to become the slave of miserable vanity! Thine eye watched over her, O my God. Those passing failings of St. Teresa will only serve to show forth the power of Thy grace, and the patience of Thy love.

Her vocation to the religious life was, for her, the occasion of terrible struggles. To leave all, to live under an austere rule, in perpetual dependence: this was indeed a great sacrifice! But, on the other hand, would she be rash enough to expose herself to damnation? What a glory to belong to God alone! What a torment nevermore to belong to one's self! Jesus offers her His cross. She accepts it. So painful was this determination to our saint, that, in describing her torture, she compares it to the dislocation of bones, to a violent tearing off of limbs. Nothing, however, breaks down her courage. The more bitter the cup, the more merit she gains by drinking it to the dregs. Her heavenly Spouse demanded of her other painful sacrifices even after the taking of her vows, by urging her, for love of Him, to renounce too frequent and intimate conversations with seculars. "God," she said, "called me in one direction, and the world in another; my soul was in continual trouble and distress. Twenty years have I spent in that struggle. My falls were numerous, and my returns to God destitute of generosity."

It is, therefore, true that the nature of the saints did not differ from ours, that some of them remained a long time in a state of languor before attaining a high perfection. Why then should we give way to discouragement? St. Teresa, however, was not satisfied with sanctifying herself alone.

II. Being inflamed with an ardent zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of her brethren, the thought of so many souls which

go to destruction filled her with bitter anguish. She prayed fervently for the conversion of sinners, for the apostles who preached the Gospel in foreign countries. She felt inspired to labor in person for the perfection of Religious, and with this end in view, she undertook the reformation of the Order of Mount Carmel. She foresaw the storms of contention that will arise, but God was her strength and she feared nothing.

As soon, indeed, as she had made known her intentions, a spirit of bitterness and animosity broke out against her in all Spain. She was censured by all. She was but a proud Religious, a hypocrite, desirous of distinguishing herself by some conspicuous action. Such were the grievances laid against her. Her designs were opposed everywhere. The more moderate expressed pity for her, as being led astray by an exalted imagination and an imprudent zeal. Countless were the vexations she had to suffer during the twenty years which she devoted to the execution of her design. Far from losing courage, she fancied that in this opposition on the part of men there was certain evidence of the approval of heaven. She had but one fear when the interests of God were at stake, and that was to be wanting in confidence.

The virtues which were the result of so many trials compel us to acknowledge that it was both more glorious for her and more instructive for us that her pious projects should have met with so much opposition. It was more glorious for her, for in this we have to admire the constancy of a soul particularly characterized by weakness. It was more instructive for us, for at the sight of her invincible courage, we feel ashamed of our own sluggishness, which dares not undertake anything, and becomes disheartened at the least difficulty. Let us humble ourselves deeply, and make an act of faith. "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 13.)

Second Point.—St. Teresa's success is a condemnation of our diffidence. She is but a feeble woman; her designs are great; the difficulties in her way appear to be unsurmountable, yet she succeeds in everything. The secret of her success lies in her confidence in God and nothing else. Notwithstanding most severe trials, dislike, weariness in spiritual life, she attains eminent sanctity. She meets naught but oppositions and contradictions in the work of the reformation, and yet the reformation flourishes and spreads to different countries.

Each Christian and sacerdotal soul has its particular graces, and the degree of its perfection consists in its fidelity to follow it. The peculiar grace of St. Teresa was that of prayer. She writes: "One day when, by the advice of my confessor, I was fervently praying

to God to let me know His will, I had an ecstasy, and I distinctly heard these words: I will that henceforth thy conversation be with the angels." This was for her the beginning of a radical change. She renounced her former friendships, and gave herself unreservedly to the most intimate communications with God. From that time she was raised up to a most extraordinary mode of prayer. In those visitations from heaven she received the many extraordinary inspirations which have made her writings one of the richest treasures of the science of the saints. There it was, principally, that she obtained that divine love which directed all her works and comforted her in her trials.

The two loves by which God sanctifies the most perfect souls, viz., the love of sufferings and the love of enjoyment, were equally conspicuous in St. Teresa. Love of suffering. Her perpetual fastings, her long vigils, the sharp thorns with which she used to tear her flesh, her sicknesses, temptations, interior desolations, all the pains which she endured, surpass anything that can be said or written, but surpass not what she desired to suffer. The greater the number of her crosses, the more she desired to receive. Suffering or death alone can satisfy her love: *Aut pati aut mori.* Love of enjoyment. Who can tell the joy which inundated her soul during those ecstasies and apparitions of the Saviour, when He revealed to her the wonders of His mercy in her regard, as when He said to her that if heaven had not been created, He would create it for her? By following those two different roads, she arrived at the most sublime perfection.

In the reformation of the Order of Mount Carmel, her success was especially great, notwithstanding the obstinate opposition of a superior who allowed himself, God so willing, to have become prejudiced against her. Though destitute of all human assistance, she accomplished her pious project by means of her boundless confidence in God. All glory reverts to the Lord, for His powerful arm has done everything.

Let us return thanks to God for the graces He deigned to grant to St. Teresa, and, through her, to the whole Church. Let us imitate her courage, and her confidence in God. We shall see the following words realized in ourselves as in her: "They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." (Is. xl. 31.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The courage of St. Teresa confounds our sluggishness. Greatness of her undertakings. She resolves to reach a de-

gree of eminent holiness, and to lead with her a great number of souls to perfection. Many were the obstacles of all kinds, many her struggles, interior and exterior, when she embraced the religious state. God called her in one direction, the world in another. She foresees many difficulties in the work of her intended reformation, but God will be her strength.

Second Point.—The successes of St. Teresa condemn our diffidence. She succeeded in reaching a high degree of holiness, notwithstanding the distaste, the weariness, etc., of the spiritual life. She also succeeded in the reformation of the Order of Mount Carmel, and saw it flourish and spread far and near, notwithstanding contradictions and oppositions. Each soul has its special grace; the special grace of Teresa was the gift of prayer.

November 1.—All Saints' Day.

MEDITATION CXXXVII.

THE INTERCESSION OF THE SAINTS.

The Church offers to us on this day three great subjects of joy and edification: The *happiness*, the *example*, and the *intercession* of the saints.

1.—*The Happiness of the Saints Gives Us a Foreknowledge of Our Own Happiness in Heaven.*

2.—*The Example of the Saints Shows Us the Way that Leads to this Happiness, and Removes Imaginary Difficulties.*

3.—*Their Intercession Enables Us to Walk Therein with Ardor and Perseverance.*

First Prelude.—I figure to myself heaven, open over my head. I see therein all the saints stretching out their arms to me and inviting me to come and share their happiness. I hear them repeating, as a joyous canticle, the Gospel of the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. . . . Blessed are the meek. . . . Blessed are the clean of heart. . . . Blessed are they that weep, etc."

Second Prelude.—Blessed friends of God, obtain for me the grace to imitate you faithfully in the life of abnegation and charity which you embraced with so much wisdom, and kept up with so much courage and perseverance.

First Point.—The happiness of the saints affords us a foreknowledge of our own. Heaven has been conquered for us, as it was for the innumerable multitude of saints whose crowns and palms the Church causes to shine so brilliantly before our eyes on this day. "I saw a great multitude which no man could number . . . and palms in their hands." (Apoc. vii.) The blood of Jesus Christ belongs to us as it did to the saints. All we have to do is to take possession of the priceless gift.

O my soul, on this day, at least, do thou leave the earth: *Sursum corda.* Enter this palace of the elect, of which God Himself is the architect, and wherein He displays all His magnificence. Contemplate the august and delightful society into which thou shalt have a place, unless thou be senseless enough to exclude thyself from its ranks. Behold the choirs of the angels, of the archangels, of the thrones, of the dominations, the venerable patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the triumphant army of martyrs, the imposing senate of pontiffs and of doctors, the victorious troop of good priests who fought so valiantly for Jesus Christ and for the salvation of souls. Behold, after light tribulation, they enjoy immense glory, and are inebriated with a "torrent of delights." (2 Cor. iv. 17.)

The object of their glory is God Himself—God, the inexhaustible source of all felicity, the essence of all perfection. He fills their intellect with the brightness of His light, their will with the abundance of His peace, their faculties with the immensity of His good. They see, they love, they praise Him, they see the first Beauty, and its sight enraptures them; they love the essential Goodness, and this fills up their hearts. The enjoyment is without alloy, it is an inheritance which shall never be contested. They praise God, and the canticles which express their joy, their admiration, their gratitude and their love, shall last for all eternity, like the sentiments which inspire them. O city of God, habitation of the saints, where everything abideth, and nothing passes away, where everything is found, and nothing is wanting, where everything is quiet and sweet, without any mixture of trouble or bitterness! O heaven so beautiful, I can not comprehend thee, but I can deserve to enter thee! O my soul, hear Jesus saying to thee at this moment: *Fili, non te frangant labores quos assumpsisti propter me, nec tribulationes te deficiant usquequaque; sed mea promissio in omni eventu te roboret et consoletur. . . . Leva faciem tuam in coelum; ecce, ego et omnes sancti mei mecum, qui in hoc saeculo magnum habuere certamen; modo gaudent, modo consolantur, modo securi sunt; modo requiescunt et sine fine mecum in regno Patris mei permanebunt.* (Imit. l. iii, ch. 47.)

Second Point.—The examples of the saints show us the way to heaven, and remove imaginary difficulties. They have followed the right road since they have reached the happy goal. Let us consider the thought of Bourdaloue. What is a saint? A saint is a real, visible, palpable, and substantial idea of evangelical perfection. When God shows us a saint, He seems to say to us as He said to Moses, when showing him the image of the tabernacle: *Inspice, et fac secundum exemplar.* Behold this living portrait; this is what you ought to be. The example of this elect will teach you what you owe to your God, to your neighbor, to yourself: *Inspice et fac.* The life of a saint is a lesson which every one can understand. While it enlightens us, it also excites our courage by dissipating our allusions and our vain fears.

Illusion concerning the nature of true merit. We imagine that there is no great virtue save in some extraordinary gift, the gift of contemplation, the gift of tears. But many saints never received any such favor. To some they appeared more to be feared than to be desired. St. Bernard used to exclaim: Less unction, O Lord, and more strength in my trials; less attraction and more charity; less spiritual delights and more real fervor: *Eis contentus ero, caetera derelinquo!* St. Francis Xavier was grieved interiorly over the abundance of his consolations: *Satis est, Domine, satis est.*

Illusion concerning that which gives value to our works. Is it renown? Countless numbers of saints never performed but the commonest actions. What did Mary do? Among those whom we behold sitting upon thrones in heaven there are many who lived like hermits in the midst of the world, or full of zeal for the faith, though they crossed no seas to preach it; devoted to penitence, although they did not wear its frightful apparel.

Illusions concerning the obstacles they imagine they see in the way to sanctity, viz.: Violent passions, strengthened by repeated shortcomings. Were the elect of God without passions? Were they not heard to complain that in them the flesh rebelled against the spirit? "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24.) Strong passions well governed have made greatest saints. The glory which they enjoy we measure by the victories which they gained. We, therefore, confess that they had to fight as well as ourselves. As to our relapses, and the force of habit which results from them; were there no illustrious saints once well-known sinners? Their example shall always demonstrate that it is not impossible to become a saint, nay, that holiness can be obtained easily with the help of God's grace, which is never wanting, and that there are found in it joys as real and infinitely more pure than the joys of the world.

Finally, those glorious friends of God who encourage us by their examples are also powerful protectors. To all the saints we may apply what St. Bernard said of one of them: *In terris visus est, ut esset exemplo, in coelum levatus est, ut sit patrocinio.* (Ser. 2 de Sanc. Vict.)

Third Point.—The saints help us powerfully by their prayers. They pray for us. It is a dogma of our faith, and their intercession contributes powerfully toward our sanctification. We pray according to the desires of our hearts, and these are, at times, unjust or contrary to the will of God; we do not ask for the grace which would obtain for us the sovereign good. But the saints see our real interests and ask for nothing but what is useful to our welfare. Their prayers are efficacious, for each of them is offered in conformity with His designs.

The prayer of a saint is in itself much more powerful than all our prayers, for the dignity of the person who prays enhances the merit of the prayer. This prayer is offered with greater purity, being entirely free from selfish motives; with greater attention, because they enjoy the sight of God, and with immense fervor, because of their admirable charity.

It is true, therefore, that the saints, in the midst of their triumph, forget not our miseries. Secure as they are in the possession of their own happiness, they are no less solicitous with regard to our salvation: *Jam de sua immortalitate securi, et de nostra salute solliciti.* How great should be my joy and confidence when I say to myself: All the saints of heaven are my devoted friends and have all power with God, for the power He has given them to assist me is a considerable part of their reward. All offer me the benefit of their prayers. If I so wish, the apostles shall obtain for me zeal, the martyrs strength, the doctors light, the virgins spotless purity. In return they ask me to think of them, especially in the oblation of the Holy Sacrifice, returning thanks with them and for them, to Him who crowned His own gifts when He crowned their merits: *Ut illis proficiat ad honorem, nobis autem ad salutem: et illi pro nobis intercedere dignentur in coelis, quorum memoriam agimus in terris.* Let us love to repeat, especially to-day and during the whole octave, the following prayer: *Sancta Maria et omnes Sancti intercedant pro nobis ad Dominum: ut nos mereamur ab eo adjuvari et salvari, qui vivit et regnat in saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The happiness of the saints gives us a foreknowledge of our own. Heaven has been conquered for us. The blood

of Jesus Christ gives us an incontestable right to it. All we have to do is to take possession of it. Let us contemplate leisurely the admirable society of the elect. They see, they love, they praise God, and their canticles of joy shall last for all eternity, like the sentiments which inspire them. O heaven, I can not comprehend thy beauty; but I can possess thee if I only wish to do so.

Second Point.—The example of the saints shows us the way to heaven, and removes imaginary difficulties. The life of a saint is a lesson intelligible to all. It enlightens us and does away with our illusions. I. Regarding the nature of real merit. It does not consist in extraordinary favors; there were many saints who seemed rather to fear than to desire them. II. Relating to that which lends value to our works. In the lives of the greater part of the saints there were none but the commonest actions. III. Relating to the obstacles to holiness which we imagine we find within ourselves. The saints also had passions. Many of them were once great sinners.

Third Point.—The intercession of the saints helps us to attain that happiness which they enjoy. They pray for us, and their intercession is more powerful than our own prayers. They see our real interests, and ask God to grant us that which is for our spiritual welfare. This personal dignity gives efficacy to their prayers, which are free from all selfish motives. How great should be my joy and confidence when I say to myself: All the saints of heaven are my devoted friends, whose power with God is very great. Let us congratulate them upon their happiness, let us deserve to share in it with them by invoking them, and striving to imitate them.

November 2.—Commemoration of All Souls.

MEDITATION CXXXVIII.

HELPING THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

The *Imitation of Christ* says, that we do not long remember those whom we no longer see. The greater number of the departed would soon be entirely forgotten had not the Church instituted this solemnity to recall them all to our memory. *Commemoratio omnium fidelium defunctorum.* Devotion toward assisting and delivering the souls in purgatory is grounded upon one of the most consoling dogmas of our faith, the communion of saints. The good priest practises it earnestly, and propagates it zealously. For the living he can not do as much good as he would; and, as a

compensation, he remembers the departed souls, for in their case, the exercise of his charity finds no opposition.

1.—*The Souls in Purgatory Deserve Our Compassion.*
2.—*We can Easily Assist or Deliver the Suffering Souls in Purgatory.*

First Point.—The souls in purgatory deserve our compassion.

I. For whom does the Church, especially on this day, solicit our commiseration by appealing to our faith and to our memory? *Commemoratio?* It is in behalf of those holy souls whose possession of God's eternal kingdom is already assured. Although God treats them as an inexorable judge, they are patient and resigned; they bless Him as the most tender of Fathers, they acknowledge that they have fully deserved His chastisements. "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right." Those souls have, moreover, either natural or spiritual relations with us which demand that we should not remain insensible to their sufferings. Are there not in this somber dwelling-place at least some members of our flock, children of our family, penitents who confessed their sins to us? Perhaps we are not entire strangers to the cause of their sorrows. Perhaps their infidelities would have been fewer, perhaps they would have obtained full remission of their indebtedness if our zeal had been more active and vigilant.

II. What do they suffer now? Deprivation of the presence of God, the torment of fire. Noble and holy victims, who would not have compassion for you in your sufferings?

In order to have some idea of the first of these two pains, let us consider that the deprivation of a good is more painful in the ratio that the good itself is more excellent, better known, that our rights to it are more incontestable, and that we are led to desire its possession by a stronger inclination. The good of which the souls in purgatory are deprived is God Himself, the center and plenitude of all good; God whom they have a right to possess in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ. They had seen Him in His beauty, and to their love of Him no love of earth can be compared. Who shall comprehend with what vehemence they thirst after Him; how intense their sufferings at being repelled by Him? Love, joined to the beautiful vision which in heaven constitutes the chief happiness of the elect, is, in purgatory, the torment of the souls therein detained. Everything which here on earth weakens the attraction of a soul toward God, its beginning and its end, has now disappeared, and it now longs to possess Him with an ardor which imagination can not conceive.

When we recite the Office of the Dead, we fancy that we hear

the moanings of those poor souls drawn upward to God by all the weight of their love, and rejected by Him as unworthy to stand in His presence. At times it is to Him that they address their sighs and their wailings: "As the heart sighs after the fountains of water, so does my soul sigh after Thee, O Lord." (Ps. xli. 2.) "Where are Thy ancient mercies?" (Ps. lxxxviii. 50.) "I cry to Thee and Thou hearest me not. I stand up and Thou dost not regard. Thou art changed to be cruel toward me and in the hardness of Thy hand Thou art against me." (Job, xxx. 20, 21.) At other times they deplore the long duration of their exile. "Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged." (Ps. cxix. 5.) "When shall I come and appear before Thy face?" (Ps. xli. 3.) Often it is to themselves that they address bitter reproaches. Where is Thy God, O senseless soul? Why dost thou not enjoy His felicity? Had I only been vigilant, had I made the light sacrifices that were demanded of me, I should have escaped this dreadful misfortune! Now I have to suffer for my tepidity and sluggishness, since they deprive me of the possession of my God!

To the torment of this deprivation there is added the punishment of fire. Concerning the nature of this fire and the sufferings which it causes, let us meditate on the language of the Fathers. To the question regarding the nature of the fire of purgatory St. Thomas answers: *Idem est ignis qui damnatos cruciat in inferno, et qui justos in purgatorio purgat.* (In. quart. dis. 20.) St. Anthony answers the same question as follows: *Idem ignis in substantia cruciat purgandos et damnatos; sed primos ad tempus, secundos in perpetuum.* And St. Gregory declares as follows: *Illum transitorium ignem, omni tribulatione aestimo praesenti intolerabiliorem.* St. Augustine expresses the same sentiment in words still more emphatic: *Dicet aliquis: non pertinet ad me quamdiu moras habeam, si tamen ad vitam aeternam perrexero. Nemo hoc dicat, carissimi, quia ille purgatorius ignis durior est quam quidquid potest in hoc saeculo poenarum videri, aut cogitari, aut sentiri.* St. Thomas goes as far as to say: *Minima poena purgatorii major est maxima poena hujus mundi.*

The holy souls in purgatory, in their extreme destitution, have no hope save in us. The poor man eases his poverty by working; if he can not work, he begs; and his sad destitution moves others to compassion. With regard to other unfortunates, the case is the same. Some resource is always left to them, and the surest ground of hope is prayer to God who never rejects it. But to the souls in purgatory everything is wanting if our charity will not remember them. For them there is no divine mercy—its reign is ended. The whole of the debt is now to be paid, "to the last far-

thing." They do not sow in the other world; the day is ended; it is succeeded by the night, "in which no man can work." (John ix. 4.) What of their companions? All are equally powerless to assist one another. To us alone it would be useful for them to make known their distress; but, alas, we can neither see their tears nor hear their lamentations. Let us at least hear the language which the Church puts upon their lips on this day, and if we feel any compassion while meditating on them, let us not harden our hearts. "Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, ye at least, my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me." (Job, xix. 21.) Shall we, through our negligence and indifference, be as severe as the just God who because of His justice is forced to chastise them? "Why do you persecute me as God?" (Ib.)

Second Point.—We can easily help and deliver the souls in purgatory. Indeed this is an article of faith. We can not, says the Roman catechism, be sufficiently thankful for the goodness of the Lord, who has given power to men to mutually atone for one another, and thus repay the debt due divine justice. This we can easily do, for the Church provides us with means to do so, as multiplied as they are easily employed. They are principally the sacrifice of the Mass, prayer, alms-deeds, and indulgences.

We have at the altar the most powerful means of helping the souls in purgatory. The Council of Trent has defined (Sess. xxv) "that there is a purgatory and that the souls which are detained there are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but above all by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar." "It was not in vain," says St. John Chrysostom, "that the apostles recommended a particular mention to be made of the souls departed at the very moment when the adorable Victim is immolated; they knew that they had a great part in the fruits of this immolation." Holy Mass has, in fact, an infinite value. It is the blood of Jesus Christ that speaks there, and asks for justice and mercy. It asks for justice for the Saviour, for He merely claims the price of His sufferings. It asks for mercy for those captive souls, for He has a right to apply His merits to them. St. Monica, being about to die, said, speaking of her burial: "Be not concerned with regard to my body; do with it what you like; all that I ask of you is that you remember me at the altar of the Lord." (Conf.)

Under the name *prayer*, we are to understand the different exercises of piety practised for the repose of the souls in purgatory; and under that of *alms*, we understand works of mercy, assistance of the poor, visiting the sick, those also which relate to penance, fastings, mortifications. In the application of indulgences, we draw from the treasures of the Church for the benefit of the faithful de-

parted, and we communicate to them the superabundant merits of Jesus Christ and of the saints. There is nothing so easy as to comply with conditions to which are attached the greater part of those priceless favors.

Be Thou blessed, O Jesus, for confiding to us, in Thy goodness, the power of assisting and delivering those blessed souls which, on so many accounts, are entitled to our compassion! How sweet it is to wipe away their tears and to become their benefactors! For them do we offer Thee whatever we shall do and suffer to the end of our life. To-day, especially, O my God, pour down streams of Thy precious blood upon those purging flames. Thou hast promised to hear the prayers of Thy people. Listen to the supplication which is offered Thee to-day in all Thy temples. *Pie Jesu, Domine, dona eis requiem.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The souls in purgatory deserve our compassion. I. They are holy souls destined for heaven. They bless God, whose justice they adore. They are not strangers to us. We are united to them by many ties. II. Their sufferings can not be imagined. *Deprivation* of the possession of God; and Him they know, Him they love infinitely more than He is loved on earth. Torment of fire. St. Thomas says that this fire is the same as that of hell. III. Everything is wanting to these souls if we will not assist them. The Church calls our attention to their lamentations and their prayers; will we remain insensible to their sufferings?

Second Point.—We can easily help and deliver the souls in purgatory. The principal means is the sacrifice of the Mass. This is the teachings of the Council of Trent. By prayer, alms-deeds, and by different works of mercy and penance, but especially by the application of indulgences, we can alleviate their sufferings and hasten the time of their entrance into heaven: *Pie Jesu, Domine, dona eis requiem.*

MEDITATION CXXXIX.

DEVOTION TOWARD THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

1.—*This Devotion is most Pleasing to God.*
2.—*Most Advantageous to Those Who Practise It.*

First Point.—Devotion to the souls in purgatory is most pleasing to heaven. It pleases God, not merely because of the fraternal charity which He sees in us, and which is so well exercised

by this devotion, but also on account of the glory which it procures to Him. It glorifies His providence, which in this manner has so well provided for the good of all His children, for the good of the dead through the living, and for that of the living through the dead, who shall become in heaven their zealous intercessors. It glorifies His sanctity, of which purgatory gives us a sublime idea; His justice, which in this manner receives full satisfaction through the application of the merits of the Redeemer; but above all it glorifies His goodness, His mercy, and His love, which shine so conspicuously in this devotion, and which, of all His attributes, are those which He loves best to make known. Let us, on this subject, meditate on the solid reflections of Bourdaloue, of which we give the substance:

To neglect devotion toward the dead is to have no zeal for Almighty God, who, finding His glory in the deliverance of those souls, wishes to obtain it for Himself through our action, and can justly impute it to us if He receive it not. We admire those apostolic men who cross the seas and go into barbarous countries to convert the souls of infidels to their God. But we should know that devotion toward the souls in purgatory is a kind of zeal, which, considered in its object, is equal to that which labors for the conversion of infidels; nay, it surpasses it in a manner, for those souls being holy, predestined, confirmed in grace, are unquestionably more noble before God, more beloved by Him, and in a fitter condition to glorify Him than the souls of the heathen. He adds that purgatory is a state of violence, not merely for the suffering souls therein, but for God Himself, and he shows it in this way: God sees in purgatory souls which He sincerely loves, but to which He can do no good; He sees therein souls full of merits, of virtues and holiness, which He can not as yet reward; nay, which He is bound to punish. Is there anything so opposed to the inclinations of our charitable and merciful God? It behooves us then to put an end to this violent state by delivering those souls from their prison and opening to them the gates of heaven. God has, in a manner, tied His own hands; we untie them for Him. He does not say to us as to Moses: "Let Me alone, that My wrath may be kindled against them." (Ex. xxvii. 14.) He says to us, on the contrary: Oppose My revenge; suffer not souls which I love and which you also should love, to remain victims of My anger. What are we to do? Shall we leave God under the dire necessity to punish those whom He is impatient to reward? Shall we not rather respond to His desires?

The least alleviation which we obtain for the souls in purgatory causes an increase of glory for the humanity of Jesus Christ, through

the honor which is rendered to His precious blood, since it is in view of its merits that this alleviation is granted. The sooner these souls come out of their sorrowful dwelling, the sooner does the Saviour gather up the last fruit of all He has done and endured for their salvation; up to that time they had not yet participated in the full measure of the Redemption. Mary, the Mother of mercy, the consoler of the afflicted, the guardian angels of the departed souls, the saints who are their protectors and patrons, all the court of heaven, which rejoices over the conversion of one sinner, rejoices much more when a soul makes its entrance into the eternal kingdom. O Priest, be ever faithful to practise a devotion so agreeable to God, and to all the friends of God.

Second Point.—This devotion is most advantageous to ourselves.

I. This devotion, when well understood, is a perfect exercise of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. It is an exercise of faith, since by this devotion we enter an invisible world, and labor for it with as much energy and conviction as if it were open to our eyes. We show forth our faith in the communion of saints, the efficacy of the Holy Sacrifice, the power of the Church to dispense the superabundant merits of which she is the guardian. We exercise the virtue of hope, being convinced that these suffering souls shall receive the benedictions merited by the Saviour's precious blood, and that we shall be rewarded for our zeal in helping them. If I offer up my deeds of atonement for their benefit, instead of reserving them for myself, will not that be a heroic act of the virtue of hope? In this devotion we practise charity, not only toward our brethren, but toward God; we love them because He loves them, we promote their deliverance in order to augment His glory.

In this devotion, according to St. Francis de Sales, we find all the works of mercy recommended in the Scriptures, almsgiving, the care of the sick, visiting the prisoners. We, indeed, through our piety toward the dead, appease the hunger and quench the thirst of those souls impatient of seeing God and of possessing Him. When we pay their debts with our own satisfactions, we, as it were, despoil ourselves in order to clothe them with immortal glory; we free them from a captivity harder than death; we take in those who are strangers, and heaven is the place where we give them hospitality. When the day shall have come whereon Jesus, our Judge, shall ask the question: I was hungry, did you give Me to eat? I was sick, or in prison, did you visit Me? Blessed shall be the Christian, blessed shall be the priest who will hear a multitude of souls taking up his defence and answering for him: Yes, O Lord.

this man did all this; we were Thy suffering members in purgatory. He went thither, and to Thyself he rendered all the good services which we received at his hands.

II. Let us also think of the source of graces which this devotion opens to us. God has promised to regulate His mercy according to ours, and to pour down His gifts abundantly in the bosom of him who assists his indigent brother. Were it possible for Him to forget this promise He would be reminded of it by those captives whose chains we have broken, and whose gratitude shall be for us a sure and powerful resource, either in life or death, in any difficult situation. "A faithful friend is a strong defence." (Ecclus. vi. 14.) When Joseph foretold to the butler of the king of Egypt that he would soon be restored to his office, he besought him to remember him, and to intercede for him before Pharao. The request was useless—Joseph was forgotten. It shall not be so with us if we free our brethren from the prison of purgatory. Those blessed souls shall ever consider us as their benefactors, however slight the assistance we may be able to afford them.

They shall ask and obtain for us everything really useful or necessary for our welfare. Were we on the point of death, in imminent danger of losing our souls, they would pray for us so earnestly that God would cease to be angry. Jonathan, after saving the army of Israel, is condemned to death for transgressing the commandment of his father. Thousands of voices cry out in his behalf: "Shall Jonathan then die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel?" (1 Kings, xiv. 45.) Saul could not resist; he forgave his son. In like manner souls delivered by me from purgatory would, if necessary, intercede with God for me. They would exclaim: Wilt Thou permit, O Lord, the loss of him who consoled us? Wilt Thou refuse to show mercy to him who practised so much mercy toward us? "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." True piety toward the departed is a pledge of predestination; the more so that it contributes also to sanctify us through the holy reflections which it suggests.

III. When we apply ourselves to help the departed souls, we learn to fear divine justice, more perhaps than in meditating on hell. In hell God is terrible; but who are they whom He punishes? They are obstinate enemies, who resisted to the end the advances of His grace; sinners, who shall ever remain such. In purgatory, He sees just souls which left the world in the state of grace, souls expected in heaven, who, far from murmuring against the God who punishes them, bless and adore their Saviour. Their pains do not diminish their love. God, on His part, loves them tenderly, but how severely He treats them. And what does He punish in

those souls? *Quis non timebit te, O rex gentium?* If I obey the grace which accompanies such reflection, I fly from evil, and from the very shadow of evil; I ardently embrace the practice of penance, being convinced that God would punish in me that which I should not have punished myself, and that the satisfaction which I offer to God on earth bears no comparison with that which God would exert because of my crimes. O my soul, let us follow the advice of St. Augustine: *Studeat ergo quisque sic delicta corrigere, ut post mortem non oporteat poenam tolerare.* Let us repeat with him: *In hac vita purges me, et talem me reddas cui jam emendatorio igne non opus sit.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Devotion toward the souls in purgatory is most pleasing to God. It glorifies His providence, His sanctity, His justice, above all, His mercy. With regard to its object, it is a kind of zeal equal to zeal for the conversion of heathens, and it, in a manner, surpasses it. God says not to us as He said to Moses: "Let Me alone, that My wrath may be kindled," but He seems to say: Save Me from the obligation of punishing souls which are dear to Me. Mary, the angels, the saints, all the court of heaven, rejoice when these souls are freed from their captivity.

Second Point.—This devotion is most advantageous to ourselves. I. Through it we exercise the virtues of faith, hope, and charity. In this devotion, according to St. Francis de Sales, we find united all the works of mercy so strongly recommended in the Gospel, almsgiving, visiting the prisoners, taking care of the sick, etc. II. It is for us a source of abundant graces. God has promised to deal out His mercy to us in the same measure that we have been merciful to others. Will those forget us in heaven whose entrance into it we shall have hastened by our charity? III. While occupied in assisting the departed, we learn to fear the justice of God, to abstain from the very appearance of evil, to punish in ourselves the sins which God would punish rigorously in the flames of purgatory.

November 21.—Presentation of the Blessed Virgin.

MEDITATION CXL.

RENEWAL OF THE CLERICAL VOWS—"BEWARE LEST THOU EVER FORGET THE COVENANT OF THE LORD THY GOD, WHICH HE HATH MADE WITH THEE." (Deut. iv. 23.)

1.—*Jesus Christ giving Himself to the Priest to be His Inheritance.*
2.—*The Good Priest Renewing the Offering He Made of Himself to Jesus Christ.*

First Point.—Jesus Christ giving Himself to the priest to be the portion of his inheritance. The Saviour is the treasure of all the faithful; but in a special manner He is the treasure of His ministers. Have I sufficiently considered this prerogative of the Christian and of the priest?

I. It is certain that all Christians possess sacred claims on Our Lord Jesus Christ. Every Christian is entitled to say, in the most consoling sense, the Saviour is mine. The Father gave Him to me; He gave Himself, I took possession of Him by baptism. By faith I can enjoy Him. This magnificent gift of God to men had been foretold by the prophets. (Is. ix. 6.) Proclaimed by the angels on the day of the Saviour's nativity. (Luke, ii. 11.) Marked out in the Gospel, announced to the whole world, through the apostles and their successors. The Church makes it the subject of her sweetest and most solemn canticles. *Nobis datus, nobis natus. Se nascens dedit socium, convescens in edulium, se moriens in pretium, se regnans dat in praemium.* Who can question a truth grounded upon such evidence?

O Christians, Jesus is yours! What else can you desire, if you know how to appreciate your happiness? The tears which He shed, the penance which He performed, the death which He suffered, His virtues, His merits, all that Jesus Christ has is yours, and you can in some measure say to Him, as He said to His Father: "All things that are Thine, are mine." Accept readily a gift which contains all the other gifts, employ it for the end for which it was given you, "that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish but may have life everlasting." (John, iii. 16.) Unite yourself to Jesus Christ by

faith, hope, and charity. Offer Him to God for all that is wanting to you; offer His infinitely pure life to blot out your iniquities, His virtues in place of your vices, His heart, burning with charity, in place of your tepid, languishing heart. In Him and through Him you shall fulfil all justice.

II. But if Jesus Christ be mine as a Christian, is He not much more mine as a priest? The Lord had said to the sons of Levi: You shall have no portion among your brethren. "I am thy portion and inheritance in the midst of the children of Israel." (Num. xviii. 20.) That which was merely a figure for the former priesthood is an admirable reality for the second. O words which no human lips should have dared pronounce if truth itself had not authorized us to do so! "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup." God Himself is my portion, my inheritance! That share which He would not give me among the children of the world, because it was unworthy of His munificence and of the heavenly ministry to which He called me, He gives me every day in the real, personal, substantial possession of Himself. Is not Jesus Christ wholly mine when I come down from the altar?

When I reflect on the rank He has deigned to assign to me in His Church, on the functions which I fulfil therein, I understand why the sacerdotal tribe alone has the privilege of appropriating to itself the admirable anthem: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance." From the moment that I am a priest, Jesus is mine in such a manner that I can give Him, and dispose of Him as I please. Not only is He mine, but He is within me, distributing His graces, exercising His powers, continuing His work of Redemption. He will that my voice should be acknowledged to be His. "He that heareth you, heareth Me," and to fail in respect toward me would be an outrage to Him. "He that despiseth you, despiseth Me." Every priest is a divine man, working wonders reserved to the Divinity. See what he does in the confessional, at the altar! O the rich endowment of the Catholic priesthood!

It is true that between Jesus Christ and His ministers there is a reciprocity of obligations. He is all mine, on conditions that I shall be all His. In entering the holy militia I have renounced not only the share of goods, pleasures, and honors which the world could promise to me, but I have renounced my liberty, my tastes, my love of self. The character which has conferred on me the astonishing power of offering up God as a victim to His Father has made a victim of myself. The priest dies, and is buried, as it were, with the Saviour in a new baptism. He is dead to the world, to the passions which trouble, the fears which agitate, the hopes which deceive it. A death truly precious in the sight of the Lord,

since it is the death of His saints. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Ps. cxv. 15.) It gives us a life hidden from the eyes of the world, the life of the spirit of God, the life of faith adorned with all the virtues. It makes us the living images of Jesus Christ. "For you are dead and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Col. iii. 3.) Such should I have been, since the time that I belong to the Son of God, as His minister. Such a one I was to a certain extent, at the beginning of my sacerdotal career. But alas, how easy it is to allow our first fervor to relent! On this account St. Paul recommended Timothy to stir up the grace which he had received by the imposition of hands. (2 Tim. i. 6.) This also I am invited to do by the solemnity of this day and the touching example of the Virgin given to the clergy for their Queen, their Model, and their Mother.

Second Point.—The good priest renewing the offering which he made of himself to Jesus Christ. Mary, at this time so young, did not go to the Temple to consecrate herself to God. Her irrevocable consecration dated from the moment of her immaculate conception; she did not go to the Temple to give herself to God, but to present herself to the Lord, and to acknowledge, by an exterior and solemn act, that He had entire dominion over her. She went to offer herself anew for the accomplishment of His designs; and this is what the good priest endeavors to imitate on this day. He knows well that he does not belong to himself, and as he is a priest forever, so he has given himself to Jesus Christ forever. He on this day recalls to mind the mercies of the Lord toward him, and as an evidence of his gratitude, he confirms the obligations he has contracted by renewing them.

I. The life of the most Blessed Virgin was naught, we may say, but a continued thanksgiving. The sentiment which inspired her with the sublime canticle: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum,* is the same which directs her childish steps toward the holy Temple. The Almighty had prepared her for great things; but how great already was the miracle of love wrought in her immaculate conception: *Fecit mihi magna qui potens est.* She feels the more grateful for the blessings of God as she thinks herself the more unworthy of them. *Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae.* O Priest, will you be ungrateful? You have not chosen the Lord, the Lord has chosen you. With what a noble mission He has associated you! "As the living Father has sent Me, so I send you." He has willed to make you the companion of His labors in this world, where everything passes away so rapidly, that He may make you a partaker of His glory in that kingdom where everything is unchangeable and permanent. Strive, therefore, to find, with the Prophet King,

what you might return to Him who hath given to you everything. "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He has rendered to me?" (cxv. 12.) Answer as he did: "I will pay my vows to the Lord." (Ib.)

II. Contemplate Mary prostrate before the altar on the day of her presentation and consider that her sacrifice was prompt, generous, and lasting. At the most tender age she presents herself to God. Other children had been presented to God early in life, but by their parents. The singular glory of Mary consists in this, that she offered herself without any impulse save that of her own heart. Grieve over the time you may have lost, and make up for it by the fervent renewal of your obligations. To-day, at least, let your dispositions be those of David when he exclaimed: "And I said, now have I begun." (Ps. lxxvi. 11.) Hundreds of times, O my God, did I repel or neglect Thy grace! I at last listen to its voice. Often had I said it before and never fulfilled my promise; I say it now and will execute it. Her sacrifice was generous. She renounces the most flattering and legitimate hopes; she renounces everything in order to belong more completely to her God, and this offering she makes joyfully, in the simplicity of her heart. We fancy we hear her glorious ancestor repeating the words: "I know, my God, that Thou provest hearts and lovest simplicity, wherefore I, also, in the simplicity of my heart, have joyfully offered all these things." (1 Par. xxix. 17.) Mary's offering is irrevocable. With inviolable fidelity she keeps what she has promised. Her first sacrifice continues and is confirmed by new acts of consecration and of offering. She will rise from virtue to virtue, from perfection to perfection, to such a height that her sanctity and glory shall be lost and absorbed in the glory and sanctity of God Himself.

Ah, Lord, I am too conscious of my own inconstancy to rely upon my most sincere resolutions; but I address myself to Thee who holdest all hearts in Thy hand. Strengthen me fixedly in the resolution which I now take. Proportion Thy assistance to my weakness; sustain me in my trials; grant that I may come out of all my combats with an increase of strength and courage. O God, hear my words. O Mary, let thy protection be the security and keeping of my promises. Not my mouth alone, but also my heart, my whole soul, all there is in me of power and of life, is about to pronounce this profession of my faith, this protestation of my devotion, this acknowledgment of my duties, this sacred form of my rights and hopes. "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup; it is Thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me." (Ps. xv. 5.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Jesus Christ giving Himself to the priest to be the portion of his inheritance. The Saviour is the treasure of all the faithful, but particularly of His ministers. I. Every Christian can justly say: Jesus Christ is mine, His Father gave Him to me; He has given Himself: *Nobis datus, nobis natus. Se nascens debit socium.* II. But if as a Christian I possess Him, much more do I possess Him as a priest. That which for the Levitical priesthood was but a figure is for ours an admirable reality. "I am Thy portion and inheritance in the midst of the children of Israel." From the moment that I became a priest it has been in my power to give Jesus and do with Him as I would. He is mine, He is within me. "He who heareth you, heareth me." But there is reciprocity of obligation between Jesus Christ and His minister.

Second Point.—The good priest renewing the offering he made of himself to Jesus Christ. Mary does not go to the Temple in order to give herself up to God; this she did at the moment of her conception; she goes to the temple to present herself. This is what the priest does on this day. It is an act of gratitude in him, as it was in Mary, Mary's sacrifice was prompt, generous, and constant. In what manner shall I imitate her?

APPENDIX.

On Ecclesiastical Retreats.

I. The spiritual exercises, commonly called retreats, are always substantially the same, whoever may be the persons conducting them, or whatever length of time may be devoted to them; there is no variation save in the forms. To make a retreat will always mean a withdrawal from the world to meditation and silence, from mental agitation to tranquillity, from human thoughts to divine thoughts. A retreat will always mean a deep and serious reflection on the manner in which we may have spent at least a certain portion of our lives, with the all practical view to strive against, and overcome our evil inclinations, to reform what may be amiss in our conduct, and to regulate our lives for the future on a plan conformable to the will of God. This holy will is to be known; it is to be embraced. We prepare ourselves for it by meditating on the eternal truths which enlighten, stimulate, purify us, and disengage us from all things, that we may adhere to God alone; also by interior self-examination, by the study and contemplation of the mysteries of Jesus Christ.

II. The most indispensable condition for a good retreat is isolation, both exterior and interior, the latter being the most important of the two. We are never entirely "on retreat" except when perfectly disengaged from every worldly preoccupation. The further we remove from creatures, the nearer God draws to us. He loves to find that soul alone which He comes to visit in His great mercy. There are, however, exigencies of state, of position, of health, which do not permit all persons to equally withdraw from the world, or to remain separated from it for the same length of time. Hence there are for the clergy three kinds of retreats, viz.: general retreats, private retreats, and those which may be termed mixed retreats, which in some respects participate in the advantages of the two others.

III. The general retreat is made in common under the guidance of the bishop, who every year invites a number of his clergy, or even all, divided into two sections, to stir up the grace which is in

them. "Those days are days of sweet repose after the battles of the Lord, and the fatigues of the apostolate. We have in a retreat a reunion of brethren assembled in the same house, having but one heart, under the direction of the chief, rather of the father whom God has appointed to govern the family; a blessed solitude, in which the air is more pure, the light more vivid, God's presence more sweetly felt, and the heart better disposed to accept the emotions of faith and piety; it is a spiritual bath, in which the guides of nations, those spiritual eagles, feel that the vigor of their youth is renewed; a heavenly school at which all holy priests and pastors were formed to the practice of the virtues which make us pleasing to God, and useful to men." (Mgr. Giraud.)

Incalculable is the good that may and that really does result from those general retreats, which so touchingly represent the apostles pressing about the person of Jesus Christ. We find in all of them the different kinds of graces united to the most favorable circumstances for insuring their efficacy. We need not, therefore, wonder that our venerable bishops, convinced that this is a question of progress or decay, of life or death, use all their endeavors to regulate ecclesiastical retreats in their dioceses, and make them obligatory, and that good priests embrace the opportunity with alacrity and much edification. We must confess, however, that causes may occur which would much diminish, nay, entirely paralyze the good success of retreats, and we shall presently point out some of them.

IV. It has frequently been said that recollection is the soul of retreats. Nothing can be more true. With equal truth it may be declared that silence is the soul of recollection; now there are obstacles to recollection found in those numerous reunions of a general retreat, occuring at stated times. Mgr. Plantier, bishop of Nismes, points out, in a discourse on this subject, three of those obstacles.

The first obstacle to silence comes from levity. One will talk because he has not the courage to keep silence. Reflection does not enter either into his tastes or his habits; nothing frightens him so much as the idea that he must withdraw into himself, and commune with God alone. He seeks out a brother priest, who, feeling the same reluctance as he does, experiences, like himself, as it were, a desire to talk. When he has found him, they will know how to amuse each other, and to abridge, by frivolous conversations, days which to them would appear most tedious and endless if they were spent in continual recollection.

The meeting of friends is another obstacle to silence. They have been for a long time deprived of the company of a brother

priest whom they love. How much they have to communicate one to another! So many sad or happy events have occurred in the pastoral house or in the parish! So many occurrences in the diocese, in the church, in the political world! It seems so enjoyable to interchange mutual impressions on all these matters! Behold a subject of dissipation for the days of the retreat.

At other times, also, affairs of different kinds are a serious obstacle to recollection and silence. A priest may have difficulties in his parish; he may have a lawsuit on his hands, etc.; how is he to get out of these difficulties? This is what he wants to find out during the retreat; this is the sole end he will have in view during these days of benediction.

If we will make a fruitful retreat, we must necessarily subject ourselves to the rules of the retreat, and especially to the rule of silence. As far as possible each priest should have his separate cell, to which he will retire in the interval of the exercises, in order to meditate privately on the subject he shall have considered in common, in order to write down the inspirations and graces he shall have received, the resolutions he has taken, etc. It is also most desirable that all those who intend to follow the exercises should begin and end them together. To arrive on the second or third day of the retreat, or to withdraw before its termination, would be an injury to the general good and no profit to one's self.

V. An illusion of the most dangerous kind, and one which we think is very common, consists in bringing to the retreat a simply passive co-operation instead of an active one. We have in the following passage the opinion of St. Ignatius concerning spiritual exercises: *Sicut deambulare, ire, currere sunt exercitio corporalia; ita etiam quilibet modus praeparandi et disponendi animam ad tollendas a se omnes affectionnes inordinatas, et postquam quis eas sustulerit, ad quaerendam et inveniendam voluntatem divinam, in vitae suae dispositione, ad salutem animae, vocantur exercitia spiritualia;* now, hear on this matter the remarks of an able commentator of the book composed in the grotto of Manresa: *Corporaliter exercetur, non qui alium ambulantem, euntem, currentem spectat vel audit, sed qui ipse ambulat, ipse it, ipse currit.*

To make a retreat, therefore, does not consist in listening with attention to him who exhorts, reflects, prays, contemplates aloud; but we ourselves must pray, reflect, and contemplate. One must *act*, must *exercise* himself. Let us hear another excellent master of spiritual life: "Those are mistaken who would always be reading, reciting vocal prayers, or hearing pious discourses; I grant that we may feel moved at times by a good reading, or the words of the preacher . . . but it happens, also, that compunction dis-

appears as soon as the book is closed, or as soon as the preacher is through, and that it never comes back but with the book or the instruction. . . . The silence of meditation should act for you the part of the book and of the pious instruction; it may happen, moreover, that while always learning, you will never acquire wisdom. Whence is it, alas! that there are so few contemplative souls even among learned priests and religious, nay, among theologians, if it be not found in the almost insurmountable reluctance that we experience to find ourselves alone in the presence of ourselves, there to make deep and serious reflections and to apply them to the needs of our souls?" (Gers.)

VI. The choice of the subjects to be treated of in our retreats should be conformable to the end we should have in view in following the exercises. This end, St. Vincent de Paul tells us, ought to be an entire renovation of ourselves. "He who makes the retreat well passes into another state; he is no longer what he was before. In introducing us into this solitude where He wishes to speak to our heart (Osee, ii. 4), God says to each one of us, as He said to His prophet: "Lo, I have set thee this day . . . to root up and to pull down, to make and to destroy, and to build, and to plant." (Jer. i. 10.) Here, indeed, we shall find the fittest means to effect in us a radical change, such as He demands of us who has led us to it; here we shall find all that is needed to destroy and to build, to root up and to plant. But among those means the most important, no doubt, is meditation on those truths which move the soul to its very depths. To suppress the meditation on the last ends, death, judgment, heaven and hell, would be to destroy the retreat. We are much less wanting in the knowledge of our duties than in the sincere will to accomplish them. It is principally on the will that we ought to act.

VII. The good priest always receives joyfully the notice of the day on which the retreat will open, and the invitation to come and participate in its exercises. If, however, he be deprived of this advantage, he fails not, some time or other, to give up for a few days the cares of his ministry and to retire into solitude, in a seminary, in a community, at a brother priest's house, or in his own dwelling, and there, with the help of some good book, attend privately to his pious exercises. God, who is ever found when sought in simplicity, blesses the efforts of such a priest. He gives him light, inspires him with holy desires and wise resolutions, and, in case he had lowered himself too much toward earth, raises him up toward heaven.

VIII. Finally, there is a third class of retreats which we call mixed, which being neither precisely *general* nor *private*, have not

the same advantages as those of the first class, and have more of them than private retreats. There are certain communities which generally and at stated times admit to their houses ecclesiastics who wish to meet there together in order to go through the exercises in common. A director proposes the points of meditation, gives the introductory advices, and, according to circumstances, delivers a conference or an exhortation, and sometimes both the conference and the exhortation. We can not too warmly recommend these retreats when they are possible. We do not find in them the same obstacles to recollection as in more numerous unions; and still there is the edification of good example and the grace of God attached to the hearing of His word.

For the use of these two last classes of retreats, and especially for the sake of those who go through the exercises privately, we have prepared the tables in the following pages.

CHOICE OF SUBJECTS

For Three Retreats of Six Days.

FIRST RETREAT.

Evening—Jesus Christ in the Desert—Love of the Retreat.

FIRST DAY.

First Meditation.—The end of man.
Second Meditation.—The end of the priest compared with that of the layman.
Consideration or lecture.—Means given to man to attain his end.
Third Meditation.—The thought of eternity.

SECOND DAY.

First Meditation.—Sin punished.
Second Meditation.—Mortal sin in the priest. Its nature.
Consideration.—Pride.
Third Meditation.—Hell. Every one should fear it.

THIRD DAY.

First Meditation.—Death.
Second Meditation.—Preparation for death.
Consideration.—Tepidity in the priest.
Third Meditation.—The prodigal son.

FOURTH DAY.

First Meditation.—The imitation of Jesus Christ. Its necessity.
Second Meditation.—Same subject continued.
Consideration.—Practice of the imitation of Jesus Christ.
Third Meditation.—Jesus Christ, model of perfect humility.

FIFTH DAY.

First Meditation.—Jesus at Nazareth. Contemplation.
Second Meditation.—Mystery of the hidden life of Jesus Christ.
Consideration.—The breviary.
Third Meditation.—The two standards.

SIXTH DAY.

First Meditation.—Meekness considered in the priest.
Second Meditation.—The mystery of the cross and sacerdotal zeal.
Consideration.—Discouragement.
Third Meditation.—Conformity to God's will. What the soul finds in it.

SECOND RETREAT.

FIRST DAY.

First Meditation.—Development of the meditation on the end of man.
Second Meditation.—Dignity of the priesthood considered in its object.
Consideration.—Recollection.
Third Meditation.—Obligation of sanctity required of the priest in virtue of his functions.

SECOND DAY.

First Meditation.—Mortal sin in the priest. Its effects.
Second Meditation.—Horror we should have of mortal sin.
Consideration.—Sad state of the priest who has no recollection.
Third Meditation.—Hell. No one should fear it so much as the priest.

THIRD DAY.

First Meditation.—The lukewarm priest on his death-bed.
Second Meditation.—The death of the good priest.
Consideration.—Loss of time.
Third Meditation.—Three touching effects of the mercy of God for sinners.

FOURTH DAY.

First Meditation.—Imitation of Christ. Its advantages.
Second Meditation.—Imitation of Christ. Its advantages continued.
Consideration.—The spirit of sacrifice.
Third Meditation.—Humility. Its excellence.

FIFTH DAY.

First Meditation.—Unreserved confidence in Providence.
Second Meditation.—The two standards, development of.
Consideration.—Activity and prudence in the exercise of zeal.
Third Meditation.—Motives of zeal for the salvation of souls.

SIXTH DAY.

First Meditation.—Jesus Christ makes for us the sacrifice of His reputation.
Second Meditation.—Jesus Christ on the cross.
Consideration.—The sufferings of the apostolic man.
Third Meditation.—The love of God. Its motives.

THIRD RETREAT.

FIRST DAY.

First Meditation.—Dignity of the priesthood considered in its powers.
Second Meditation.—Sanctity of the priesthood considered in its object.
Consideration.—How the priest should labor for his sanctification.
Third Meditation.—The priest sanctified at the altar.

SECOND DAY.

First Meditation.—Venial sin.
Second Meditation.—Abuse of graces.
Consideration.—The spirit of faith.
Third Meditation.—The sin of St. Peter.

THIRD DAY.

First Meditation.—Particular judgment.
Second Meditation.—Hell. Application of the senses.
Consideration.—Parable of the barren fig-tree.
Third Meditation.—St. Peter. Model of penance.

FOURTH DAY.

First Meditation.—The kingdom of Christ.
Second Meditation.—Humility, motives of.
Consideration.—The spirit of poverty the treasure of the good priest.
Third Meditation.—The good priest sacrifices to God his dearest affections.

FIFTH DAY.

First Meditation.—Vocation of the apostles.
Second Meditation.—Constancy of the sacerdotal zeal.
Consideration.—Care of the sick.
Third Meditation.—Lively zeal in the conversion of the Samaritan woman.

SIXTH DAY.

First Meditation.—Jesus Christ the priest's friend.
Second Meditation.—The Eucharist, a bond of union between Jesus Christ and His ministers.
Consideration.—Confidence and joy.
Third Meditation.—The good priest in heaven.

Practice of the Monthly Retreat.

The pious priest loves to enter upon his retreat often, for he well knows by experience how sweet is the manna that nourishes the soul in the desert, and how important it is for him to reflect and to pray. As he devotes one week every year to the general retreat, so he also manages to devote to it one day every month, and if on that day he can not entirely give up his occupations, he endeavors to spend it in so great a recollection, to attend so carefully to his pious exercises, that he finds himself renewed and strengthened in the resolutions of the general retreat.

The different methods published in order to facilitate this excellent practice are very much alike. We will substantially reproduce the method of R. P. de Lehen, S. J., in his book, "*The Way of Interior Peace*," being careful to modify it in such a way as to make it especially adapted to the character of the reverend clergy. We have divided it into two sections: What should be done in the evening previous to this day of recollection, and what should be done on the day itself.

I.

ON THE EVENING PRECEDING THE DAY OF THE MONTHLY RETREAT.

Choose that day of the month on which you think you will be more free, less occupied and distracted by exterior labors.

In the evening recite fervently the *Veni Creator*, implore the special help of the most Holy Virgin, of your patron saint, of your guardian angel, and of the saints toward whom you feel more devotion, and then, if possible, make the following meditation:

Meditation Preparatory to the Monthly Retreat.

First Prelude.—Recall to mind the healing of the blind man of Jericho. He falls down on his knees before the feet of Jesus,

who says to him: "What wilt thou that I should do to thee?" The blind man answers: "Good Master, that I may see." "Go thy way," Our Lord replies, "thy faith hath made thee whole." (Mark, x. 51, 52.) Hear Jesus Christ asking you the same question, and answer Him as did the blind man: "O Lord, that I may see." Show me clearly during this retreat that which displeases Thee in my conduct, and what Thou dost expect me to do.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Grant me, O Lord, to enter into the dispositions which Thou desirest of me, that I may accomplish all the designs of Thy mercy in this day of grace which Thou hast set apart.

First Point.—Holy desires. Blessed would have been Jerusalem if she had known the value of the Lord's visit on that day which He yet granted her, and which He called "this, thy day." Blessed shalt thou be, O my soul, if thou wilt know how to appreciate the gift of God! How many losses thou canst repair, how many rich treasures thou canst acquire by the proper employment of this one day of recollection! Do I, at least, desire to know myself? Am I not somewhat afraid to see a light which would trouble and accuse my conscience? If I have the desire, I must seriously examine how I stand regarding the work of my sanctification. Have I advanced toward heaven? Have I moved backward toward hell? I should ask myself what fruit I have derived from the sacraments, so often received, from all kinds of graces offered me. What victories have I gained over myself, the devil, and the world? Should not I be justly terrified if I were to be judged at this very moment.

Second Point.—Confidence. God presents Himself to me in His infinite mercy. I should have just cause to be discouraged if I were alone with my sins and my weakness, but with God I can do everything. His grace is stronger than all the powers of hell together. It is ready to be poured down in abundance upon me. I have but to ask. God continues to love me notwithstanding my infidelities; of this I have an evidence in the invitation He addresses to me, to come and rest near Him in the silence of the retreat. I hear Him say: "Come into the solitude; I shall speak to thy heart." O my soul, Jesus calls thee; to thee He says also, as to the first companions of His labors: "Come apart into a desert place and rest a little." (Mark, vi. 31.) What kindness! What a source of confidence! Great as my sins are, I can and I must hope for everything from God.

Third Point.—Dispositions of generosity. God will do for me during this retreat what I shall do for Him. "In what measure you shall mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Mark, iv.

24.) "He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly; and he who soweth in blessings, shall also reap in blessings." (2 Cor. ix. 6.) If I give myself fully to Jesus Christ, I shall draw upon myself the benedictions of His love. I will, therefore, throw myself unreservedly within the arms of my Saviour, as St. Paul did from the first instant of his conversion. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts, ix. 6.) I shall say like Samuel: "Speak, O Lord, for Thy servant heareth" (1 Kings, iii. 10), and with holy King David: "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready." (Ps. lvi. 8.)

End your meditation as you began it, by this prayer, "Lord, that I may see!" What I am, what I ought to be, what I can be, if I respond to Thy grace, that I may see my soul as it really is, that I may see my sins, my weaknesses, and Thy mercies, which yet are greater than my miseries. If you prefer it, appropriate to yourself the prayer of the Prophet King: "Give me understanding and I shall live." (Ps. cxvii. 144.) Give me, O God, the understanding of my nothingness in the sight of Thy greatness, the understanding of my duties, and of the motives which demand of me to fulfil them faithfully. I shall then live that life of faith which makes the just; my life shall be worthy of Thee and of the great mission Thou hast confided to me; it shall lead me to the blessed, to the eternal life. *Pater, Ave.*

Before retiring to rest prepare the meditation of the morrow and let its subject be one of the great truths of salvation, which you may select from the earlier chapters of this work.

II.

ON THE DAY OF THE RETREAT.

I. In the morning, on waking up, say to yourself: "I am on retreat." Offer the day to God, and ask of Him grace to spend it holily. This would be a proper moment to recite the prayer of Prime: *Domine, Deus omnipotens, qui ad principium hujus diei nos pervenire facisti,* etc.

II. Make with great care the meditation prepared on the evening previous, consecrating to it three-quarters of an hour, or even one whole hour, if you can do so, and make it according to all the rules laid down in the beginning of the first volume.

III. Celebrate holy Mass as you would celebrate it were you sure that this is the last time you will go up on the altar, and that the communion you are about to receive will be your viaticum.

If you have any trouble of conscience, you should go to confession before beginning the Holy Sacrifice. During your thanksgiving, you should speak to Jesus Christ about your retreat, asking His pardon for your sins, and praying to Him to grant you the help you need to correct yourself of your faults, to grow in priestly holiness, and to spend well the forthcoming month. This should be the subject of all your conversations with the Lord during this day.

IV. Recite the Holy Office with a new spirit, as you were wont to say it immediately after receiving the subdeaconship. It was at that time that you acquitted yourself of this obligation with great fervor, and it then appeared so sweet to you!

V. In the same spirit of renewed fervor you should perform not only your spiritual exercises, such as the spiritual readings, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, but all the actions of the day, not excepting the commonest ones.

VI. In the afternoon consecrate at least one-half hour to a serious consideration or examination of the present state of your soul. It would be well to note down briefly in writing the result of that examination, so as to compare it with that of former or of future retreats.

VII. Toward evening make the preparation for death, and end this blessed day by reciting some canticle of thanksgiving, viz.: The *Te Deum; Magnificat; Benedic, anima mea, Domino.*

Consideration on the Present State of My Soul.

After imploring the light of the Holy Ghost, I shall examine, under the eyes of God, how I acquit myself of my more important obligations, what my dispositions are regarding God, my neighbor, and the principal duties of my position.

I. Order of the day and practices of piety. Have I a rule of life, and do I observe it faithfully? Nothing is recommended more earnestly by those who have labored in a more special manner for the sanctification of the clergy than this point. He who subjects himself to a rule fulfils his obligations with greater ease, greater perfection, with more merit and constancy. Without a rule we lose time, and our life is a life of caprice. Have I made my meditation immediately after rising? Have I had for this fundamental exercise of the spiritual life all the esteem which is due to it? How did I perform my other practices of piety, spiritual readings, the two examinations, the visit to the Blessed Sacrament? The Holy Mass. How have I been accustomed to prepare for it? Did I always celebrate it with a pure conscience, with a deep spirit of

religion, with modesty, with precision, observing exactly all of the rubrics? Did I keep silence in the vestry, in putting on or while removing the sacred vestments? How did I fulfil the great duty of returning thanks after Mass?

The Divine Office. Did I remember that I should recite it in the name of, and for the wants of the universal Church? *Totius Ecclesiae os et persona.* (St. Bern.) Did I recite it *attente, reverenter devote?* My confessions. Were they frequent enough? Preceded by a suitable preparation, accompanied with sincere repentance, followed by some amendment?

II. Habitual dispositions regarding God. Am I zealous for the glory of God? Am I grieved on account of the outrages offered to Him? Have I for God that filial fear, that tenderness of conscience which causes the good priest to tremble at the sole appearance of sin? Did I not wilfully commit many sins under the pretext that they were simply venial? Did I not entirely lose the habit of walking under the eyes of God? What is my submission to His adorable providence, my gratitude for His blessings, my attention to please Him? Is it He whom I seek in my actions? Are my intentions ever entirely pure and often renewed? What love have I for Our Lord Jesus Christ, what devotion for the august Sacrament of our altars, for the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, my patron saint, my guardian angel?

III. Dispositions regarding my neighbor. To my superior I owe respect and obedience; have I nothing to reproach myself with in this point, either in my actions, words, or feelings? Was there nothing in my conduct which led people to believe that I had forgotten my holy and solemn promise: *Promittis mihi et successoribus meis reverentiam et obedientiam? Promitto.* To my brother priests I owe respect, kindness, the most cordial affection. I should, by all means in my power, foster the union of hearts so desirable between the members of the clergy. Did I do or say anything contrary to it? Did I repel the base jealousy which grieves because of the successes of others? Did I criticise, judge rashly the conduct of my brother priests, reveal their failings when the most ordinary charity commanded me to hide them? To my neighbor, whoever he may be, I owe love, support, forgiveness. Have I not offended against him by detractions, calumnies, desires of revenge, outbreaks of ill humor? Regarding the souls which heaven has confided to me I should be zealous, devoted, patient, invariably kind. Have I labored indefatigably for the salvation of my people? Have I prayed for them with a fervor equal to the desire I should entertain for their happiness? Here I should consider the duties of the pastoral life, preaching, con-

fessions, catechism. I should think on the different classes of my parishioners, the children, the young, the old people, the sick, the just, the sinners. Have I made myself all to all that I might gain all to Jesus Christ?

IV. Care of my own perfection. Have I labored seriously toward my spiritual advancement? "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice." Without this desire of perfection, without this *indefessum proficiendi studium*, this *jugis conatus ad perfectionem* of which St. Bernard speaks, relaxation becomes unavoidable, and it can lead us very far astray. What progress have I made in the Christian and sacerdotal virtues? Is my faith simple, lively, active? Is my hope firm and humble, free from despondency and presumption? How do I love God? Is there not within my heart some attachment which, as it were, divides it? Interest, ambition, too natural friendship, never fail to produce this unhappy effect. How did I practise the virtue of religion? This is pre-eminently the virtue of priests. Are my church and vestry kept in a proper state of cleanliness? Do the sacred vessels, the vestments, and everything used in divine worship, bear witness to my profound respect for holy things? Am I grave, modest, recollected in the exercise of all my functions, and in particular at the altar, and in the administration of the sacraments? What are my dispositions regarding abnegation, the spirit of sacrifice, love of sufferings? Am I chaste of mind, of heart of body? Have I always been saintly and timid in this matter? How did I watch over my imagination, my heart, my senses! Were my relations with persons of the other sex ever commanded by necessity, or at least by utility and conducted with becoming prudence? Have I not given way to dangerous curiosity in my conversations, my readings, or in some other circumstance? Have I spent well my time? A priest's time is so precious! Every minute is worth an eternity! What would not a reprobate give to obtain one minute of time? Study is for me of strict obligation, how did I fulfil this duty? Have I not permitted myself, through unnecessary absences, to let sick people die without the sacraments?

V. My particular obligations. As pastor, curate. These are too often forgotten. They require devotedness, order, constancy, so as to overcome the obstacles, the tediousness and distastes which tempt us to give up everything, or to do the work of God with negligence. "Cursed be he who does the work deceitfully." (Jer. xlviii. 10.)

Preparation for Death.

KNEEL down before your crucifix, imagine that your last hour has come, that your good angel comes to tell you in the words of the prophet to Ezechias: "Take order with thy house, for thou shalt die and not live." (Is. xxxviii. 1.)

FIRST REFLECTION.—What is it to die? Death is a passage from this life to eternal happiness or misery. It is the end of time, and of all temporal things, the entrance into eternity.

I must die; I must leave everything without exception, relatives, friends, family. To all things of earth I must bid an eternal farewell. I shall leave my house, my furniture, all that belongs to me. I shall leave everything. Are there any objects that are very dear to my heart? These I shall also have to leave behind. What a folly to set our affection on things which so rapidly pass away! How many pains we take which will end in naught but regret!

I shall die! That is, my body shall be separated from my soul, and from that moment its presence shall become irksome and painful to the very ones who loved me most. They shall lay it down in the cold ground, where it shall become food for the worms! Soon will my flesh be rottenness. How much wiser it would be, instead of flattering it, to employ all my strength in working for the glory of God and the salvation of my neighbor! Will I be thought of when I shall be in the grave? Ah, how soon are the dead forgotten! How insignificant is the esteem of creatures.

I shall die. That is, I shall enter the house of my eternity! Time, the world, all things temporal and worldly shall have disappeared like a phantom; eternity alone shall remain. Oh, the terrible moment! To appear before the judgment-seat of God, alone in His presence, to be questioned concerning my whole life by that Judge who knows all things, who is infinitely just, hates sin supremely, and who, on that day, shall be without mercy! To learn of Him which of the two shall be my lot, either the heaven of the good priest for eternity, or the hell of the bad priest for eternity.

SECOND REFLECTION.—When and how shall I die? How much longer have I to live? I know not. There is no regard for age. Shall I have time to prepare for death? I do not know. I only know that many persons, nay, some of those who were sick a long time, die at the moment they least expect. Shall I receive the sacraments, or shall I die without confession? I know not. I may suddenly lose the use of speech. Moreover, when one is

sick what can he do? What folly to depend upon this last moment, when there is question of eternity!

THIRD REFLECTION.—Am I ready to die? What are my actual dispositions? Am I ready to leave everything? Am I ready to appear before the judgment-seat of God, to render Him an account of all the blessings I have received of His goodness, of all the offices, of all the ministries He confided to me? Is my conscience tranquil? Is there nothing that troubles me in my confessions, the accomplishment of the duties of my state? What folly to live in a state in which I would not like to die.

After considering for a long time these important questions, and taking the proper resolutions, recite the two following prayers while holding the crucifix in your hand:

Act of Resignation to be Made before Retiring to Rest on the Day of the Monthly Retreat.

SOVEREIGN Master of life and death, who, in order to punish sin, hast decreed irrevocably that all men should die; behold me humbly prostrate before Thee, resigned to subject myself to that law of Thy justice. In the bitterness of my soul I detest all my crimes. A rebellious sinner, I have thousands of times deserved death. I accept it in atonement for so many transgressions; I accept it in obedience to Thy adorable will; I accept it in union with the death of my Saviour. Let me die then, O my God, when, where, and in whatever manner it will please Thee. All the time which I will yet spend on earth through Thy mercy, I shall spend in detaching myself from this world which I shall soon leave, breaking asunder all the bonds which attach me to this land of exile, and preparing my soul for Thy dreadful judgment. I abandon myself unreservedly into the hands of Thy ever paternal providence. Let Thy will be done in all things and always. Amen.

Prayer to Ask the Grace of a Good Death.

PROSTRATE before the throne of Thy majesty I come, O my God, to ask of Thee the last and most important of all graces, viz.: the grace of a happy death. Howsoever criminal may have been the use of the life Thou didst give me, give me the grace to end it well, and to die in Thy love.

May I die like the holy patriarchs, leaving without regret this valley of tears, to go and enjoy eternal rest in my true country.

May I die like blessed St. Joseph, in the arms of Jesus and Mary, whilst repeating those two names which I hope to bless eternally.

May I die as the most Blessed Virgin, inflamed with the most pure love, burning with the desire to be united to the sole object of my affections.

May I die as Jesus on the cross, in the most lively sentiments of hatred of sin, of love for my heavenly Father, and of resignation in the midst of sufferings.

Holy Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit; be merciful unto me.

Jesus, who didst die for love of me, grant me grace to die for love of Thee.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me, a sinner, now and at the hour of my death.

Angel of heaven, faithful guardian of my soul, great saints whom God has given me for protectors, forsake me not at the hour of my death.

St. Joseph, obtain for me the greatest, the most precious of all favors, the grace of dying the death of the just. Amen.

Moriatur anima mea morte Justorum!

Counsels and Practices Concerning the Preparation for Death.

I. Arranging our temporal affairs. There are priests whose temporal affairs are in a deplorable state of confusion. This would be a source of extreme agitation and troubles in our last moments, when calmness is so necessary. What shall be the consequence if we be suddenly overtaken by death? Often-times considerable sums of money, given by pious people for the promotion of a good work, have passed to the heirs of the priest, because he had not taken the most ordinary precaution to guard against this misfortune. A priest should not wait a long time before making his will. St. Augustine recommends it to him in the following language: *Fac testamentum tuum, dum sanus es, dum tuus es; in infirmitate positus, blanditiis et minis duceris quo tu mon vis.* He, however, did not follow the counsel which he gave to the clergy, because he had nothing left at his death of which he could dispose. Many other saints placed themselves in the same blessed impossibility.

Our bishops should, if not command, at least counsel all the members of the clergy to make their will, and to leave to their family nothing but their movable property and the real estate in-

herited from the family; the rest of their property should go after their death, to the poor, to the diocesan seminary, the propagation of the faith or pious works.

II. Assistance of a friend and of a wise director. If you have a true friend, a wise and holy director, you possess a treasure. Promise mutually to be true and faithful to each other, and that the first of the two who will hear that his friend is in any way dangerously sick will immediately come and not quit him, if possible, until he has closed his eyes. Do not be afraid to remove useless persons from your sick chamber, so as to give free access to him who has your confidence, and whom God wills to act toward you the part of a consoling angel. He will put an end to your doubts and troubles, will animate your courage. He will cause you to enter, or to persevere in the dispositions conformable to your state, and he especially will not flatter you, when it will be time to appraise you of more or less imminent danger.

III. Help which may be derived from some exterior signs of religion, crucifixes, holy water, etc. St. Charles, during his last sickness, caused a painting of the agony and burial of Our Lord Jesus Christ to be put at the foot of his bed. The good priest, when he is dying, wishes to have before his eyes the image of Jesus Christ crucified; he retires, as it were, within the wounds of the Saviour and unites himself to Him as a victim. In taking or receiving holy water, he thinks on Him who washed his soul in His blood, and who now also wishes to purify the victim about to be offered Him. It is especially from the holy Virgin, from St. Joseph and your guardian angel, that you may then expect particular assistance, especially if you have honored them during your life. See that their images may frequently meet your eyes when death will be near at hand. The sight of the scapular, of holy relics, of the blessed taper, a symbol of the charity requisite to go and meet the Bridegroom, all objects of this kind may contribute to strengthen confidence.

IV. Reception of the sacraments. The sick priest being obliged to give good example in all things should ask in time for the last sacraments, not waiting for the suggestion to receive them. How tranquil is the soul after a good confession! The one you are about to make as a preparation for death ought to make up for the imperfection of all former ones. Have, then, so perfect a will to please God in making it, that after receiving absolution you may present yourself full of hope before Him who shall judge justices. Seek to discover your past faults by the light of eternity, wash them in the tears of sincere repentance, expiate them in the flames of divine charity.

You are now prepared to receive the holy viaticum; prepare still more for it. This will be the blessed moment, if there is no obstacle in you to the merciful designs of Jesus Christ. To address if possible some words of edification to the bystanders, to make a short act of reparation to the Son of God present in the Blessed Sacrament, to ask pardon of those he might have offended, to renew the baptismal and clerical promises, would be practices most edifying to the faithful, and of great benefit to the dying pastor.

Reanimate your faith in receiving Extreme Unction. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." (Jam. v. 15.) Death entered into my soul, O my God, through the lack of mortification of my senses; let life come back to it through the merits of Thy blood. The sacred oil had consecrated me in my ordination, that I might offer the most august of all sacrifices; let it now dispose me to offer Thee the sacrifice of my life, let it change my weakness into strength, my fear into confidence, my depression into courage, and my fear of death into an ardent desire to die, that I may be so perfectly united to Thee as to be without fear to ever forfeit Thy love.

V. Temptations to be overcome at the approach of death. The implacable enemy of mankind, and particularly of priests, who, during their life placed so many obstacles to his cruel designs, keeps in store for them terrible temptations for the time of death. The attack is that of an angel upon a man, of a spirit immortal upon a man who is dying. The soul often loses a part of its vigor when the body is weakened. It is, therefore, most important to be well prepared against those last and terrible assaults. Temptations against faith. Do not enter into a discussion with the enemy. When you are troubled with doubts, simply say, or merely express by a sign agreed upon between God and you, that you believe all that the Catholic Church believes and teaches. Temptation of presumption. The better a priest has served the Church and his neighbor, the more he has suffered, the more he has edified others, the more also does the devil impel him to confide in his own justice. He is tempted to accept the praise that is bestowed on him, as a sure evidence of his pretended virtue. Let him humble himself profoundly, and say with holy Job: *Vere scio quod non justificetur homo compositus Deo: si vole uerit contendere cum eo, non poterit respondere ei unum pro mille.* Temptation of despair. This is particularly to be apprehended by those who, like the priests, had great obligations to fulfil, and received more abundant graces, more extraordinary favors. The spirit of darkness reminds them of all these; he portrays their transgression in the most vivid, and

sometimes the most exaggerated, colors. He strives to convince them that they can not escape the anger of God after abusing all of His blessings. Do you often preach confidence, meditate on the motives which should inspire it; treasure up in your memory passages of the Scripture so replete with consolation on this subject, and you shall easily triumph at the hour of death over this terrible temptation.

Prayers usually Recited after Meditation.

I

O Jesu, vivens in Maria, veni, et vive in famulis tuis, in spiritu sanctitatis tuae, in plenitudine virtutis tuae, in perfectione viarum tuarum, in veritate virtutum tuarum, in communione mysteriorum tuorem: dominare omni adversae potestati, in Spiritu tuo, ad gloriam Patris. Amen.

II.

Anima Christi, sanctifica me.
Corpus Christi, salva me.
Sanguis Christi, inebria me.
Aqua lateris Christi, lava me.
Passio Christi, conforta me.
O bone Jesu! exaudi me:
Intra tua vulnera absconde me.
Ne permittas me separari a te.
Ab hoste maligno defende me.
In hora mortis meae, voca me.
Et jube me venire ad te,
Ut cum sanctis tuis laudem te.
In saecula saeculorum. Amen.

III.

Suscipe, Domine, universam meam libertatem. Accipe memoriam, intellectum, atque voluntatem omnem. Quidquid habeo, vel possideo, mihi largitus es: id tibi totum restituo, ac tuae prorsus voluntati subjicio. Amorem tui solum cum gratia tua mihi dones, et dives sum satis, nec aliud quidquam ultra posco.

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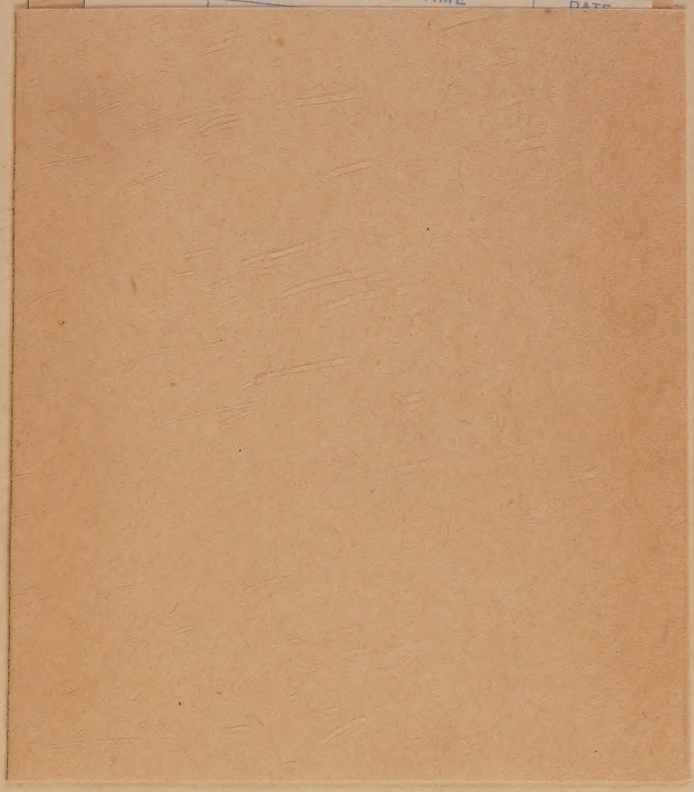

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